

# Western

MAGAZINE



SPRING 2015 | CHRISTIANS IN THE MARKETPLACE

# CONNECTING FAITH AND VOCATION

Two men, both now with the Lord, were especially instrumental in helping me appreciate the importance of all believers developing a biblical understanding of work. The first, Dr. J. Grant Howard, is well-known to long-time friends of Western because of the many years in which he served as our pastoral ministry professor. Dr. Howard included a session on work in his Spiritual Life class (the essence of which can still be found in his classic, *Balancing Life's Demands*) so it has been natural for me to continue including that topic as I eventually assumed responsibility to teach that course (now known as SFS 501 Learning to Love God and Others). That has helped me (and hopefully others!) see work as an important dimension of our discipleship alongside other roles, relationships and responsibilities through which we serve the Lord and other people in love.

The other major influence in this area has been Kent Humphreys. Kent was president of, and later the global ambassador for, Fellowship of Companies for Christ, International. We met in the early stages of our faith and work venture, which ultimately led to Kent joining our trustee board and being a valued guide in seeking to help close the perceived widespread disconnect between pastoral and marketplace leaders. I remember well Kent describing so clearly how that gap was created and the unfortunate loss of synergy and mutual empathy that resulted. He also argued that the North American workplace was the greatest unreached mission field in the world today, and that the typical church would get an amazing "return on investment" if it added a marketplace chaplain to its missions budget (in the same vein, he also suggested that pastors consider spending an afternoon a week as volunteer marketplace chaplains to expand the impact of their ministry and gain insight into the spiritual peril and potential faced by their congregants in the contemporary marketplace).

The theme of this issue relates to connecting more closely our faith and our vocations in their various forms. Dr. Gerry Breshears offers an introduction to a biblical view of work which serves as a context for bridging the secular/sacred divide as well as reminding us of our "marching orders" going all the way back to Adam and Eve. We also profile a local church, from two perspectives, that is seeking to allow its attitudes towards work to be brought into closer conformity with that biblical teaching. In addition, Dr. Bev Hislop interviewed a group of three Christian women who work outside the home to hear about their experience both in the marketplace and in a typical congregation. I trust their thoughts will be helpful for those tasked with shepherding them well. We conclude with some recommended resources for further study of this topic, along with a book review by Dr. Carl Laney.

This would also be a good opportunity to thank the Kern Family Foundation for their generous support of our ongoing quest to help more and more believers both think and live more Christianly when it comes to the world of work. Our Co-Labor events held around our various campuses (and soon to expand to some other regions), along with the online Christians in the Marketplace non-credit certificate track in our Center for Leadership Development, are two dimensions of that effort designed to provide accessible and affordable ways to experience scriptural renewal in this arena. Let us know if you'd like to learn more about either opportunity.

*Randy Roberts*

Dr. Randy Roberts  
President

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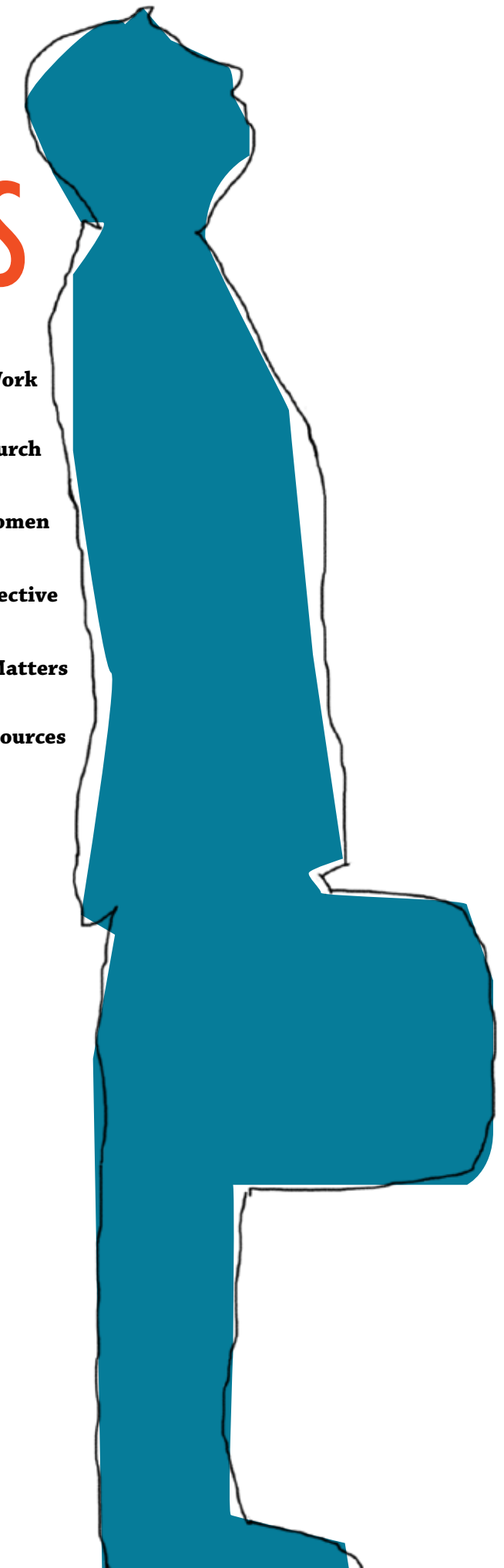
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# A THEOLOGY OF WORK



## IS WORK JUST WHAT WE DO TO MAKE A LIVING? OR IS IT A PART OF GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN?

**BY DR. GERRY BRESHEARS**

From the time God called him to “ministry” at the age of 18, Pastor David’s whole life direction had been to do “the Lord’s work.” Now, however, after two decades of serving as a pastor, he would have to desert God’s calling and start work in the secular marketplace, all because he was unable to manage the stress of a growing church.

In desperation he asked Ben, another church leader, to meet him for coffee. Like David, Ben used to be a pastor but had recently entered the workforce. David wanted to find out how Ben was satisfied and fulfilled.

The solid chairs in the retro coffee shop fit David’s mood perfectly: hard and dated. The Lord’s work, ministry, his spiritual gift of preaching, and his calling were slipping into past tense as he faced transitioning to a marketplace job.

“How can I carry out my calling to do the Lord’s work?” David lamented, staring into his coffee cup. “I only have one life and I want to spend it in service of the Lord.”

Ben, in his response, wanted to broaden David’s understanding of work.

“How does work fit into the creation story?” asked Ben. “If God has redeemed this world, what are the implications for work?”

Their conversation went on for hours as Ben helped David see how badly he misunderstood certain key concepts. He then went on to make the following points:

### A SECULAR VIEW OF WORK

David had fallen into the common definition of work as “what we do to earn a living.” We work to pay the bills. Americans define work as “what I do to make money so I can do what I really want to do.” We work for 40 years in order to retire and be our own boss.

Some Christians spiritualize this limited definition in several ways: by understanding the purpose of work to be the accumulation of wealth for the support of church, missions, etc. or as a way to get access to people, to share the gospel and then see them saved. As secular means to a sacred end, these spiritualized variations still fall short of the biblical view of work.

### A THEOLOGY OF WORK

Biblically, work is what we do with God in His sacred space (which is everywhere). God creates humans as His image bearers, speaking blessing to them. Speaking is relational, forming partnership; this makes us covenant partners with God. We are to work with Him to fill and subdue the uninhabited garden, bringing order and beauty to the uncultivated garden. The garden is Temple space where God places man to “*abad and shamar*.” Rather than “cultivate and keep” or “serve and care for,” these two words are probably best translated as “worship and obey.” Adam was created and placed in the garden to worship God and demonstrate that worship through obedience and fruitful work in partnership with God. (I discovered these points first in *True North* by Mark Liederbach.)

The purpose of work is to take the raw materials of the garden which God provided, the good gold, the aromatic resin and onyx (Gen 2:12) and create beauty, expressing love for God and neighbor.

Work is not something done to give God rest, nor is it the result of the curse. Rather, it is a part of God’s eternal blessing on humans. The Fall makes work laborious and frustrating. Thorns and thistles now grow alongside the seed-bearing food plants and humans have become instruments of production rather than blessed partners with the God of all grace.

Paul connects the love of all people, minding our business, and the work of our hands in 1 Thess. 4:10-12. No self-respecting Greek would ever see manual labor as an act of love, but the theology of work connects them. Working is an expression of love, of bringing goodness, peace and shalom in the world. Manual labor takes elements of the material world and makes it orderly and livable. Jesus-followers use the creative energy which comes graciously from the empowerment of the indwelling Spirit to create good things, for the benefit of people by bringing order and flourishing.

### THE WORK OF THE LORD

For David, “the work of the Lord” was limited to paid pastoral ministry, whereas Scripture broadens that phrase to include every kind of work. Paul addresses 1 Cor. 15:58 to all believers doing all kinds of work, exhorting them to “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” Obviously few, if any, of these first century Christians were in full-time employment by the church. Rather, they were doing the Lord’s work as they went about their everyday lives.

In the same way, Paul prays asking “God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work” (Col 1:9–10). Here, work



## BIBLICALLY, WORK IS WHAT WE DO WITH GOD IN HIS SACRED SPACE.



is anything that lives out the character of God: anything which pleases Him and bears fruit. Jesus-followers work out their faith in the way they live and work, wherever that work takes place. Paul expands his theology as he addresses slaves, calling them to “obey your earthly masters in everything...with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.” Even in the lowest level of slavery, Paul reminds them that “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” In labors that are far from the paid employment of the church, he reminds them that “It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col 3:22–24).

### MINISTRY

The dictionary definition of ministry as “the service, functions, or profession of a minister of religion” is quite different than the biblical definition. Ministry in the name and likeness of Jesus is much broader than ministry as a pastor.

The Greek term for ministry is *diakonia*, which means to render service of any kind. While it can refer to the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:8–13), it also refers to one waiting on someone at a table (Luke 12:37; 17:8; 22:26–27; John 12:2). Jesus makes it clear that the way to greatness is the way of ministry (usually translated as service) which extends to slavery (Matt. 20:26–27); the offering sent to help with famine relief in Judea (Acts 11:29); the provision of meals (Matt 8:15; John 12:2; Acts 6:2); visiting those in prison (Matt 25:44; 2 Tim 1:18); and providing financial support, (Luke 8:3; Rom 15:25; 2 Cor 8:19, 20) amongst others.

Peter echoes this when he tells all believers to “use whatever gift you have received to minister to others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace” (1 Pet. 4:10).

### SPIRITUAL GIFT OF PREACHING

Peter lists several gifts, including speaking and serving (ministry). The context makes it clear that Peter speaks of all believers; everyone is to be alert, pray, offer hospitality, and love deeply. A pastor preaching is one form of the gift of speaking, but Paul calls everyone to speak God’s words so that they can strengthen, encourage, comfort, and edify (1 Cor. 14:3–4).

1 Corinthians 12 teaches about “things of the Spirit,” which are for everyone. This is commonly interpreted as “gifts of the Spirit,” unfortunately narrowing the context from the wide diversity of workings of the Spirit to a narrow area of gifts. The Spirit who enables us to proclaim from our hearts that Jesus is Lord is the same Spirit who gives abilities or gifts (v. 4), ministries (v. 5), and workings or empowerments (v.6). The common understanding that the gifts are supernatural endowments given at or after conversion is corrected in Romans 12:6–8. The gifts are any abilities which become spiritual as the Spirit connects us to God and His service.

Verse 7 reminds us that the Spirit may manifest in anyone, at any time, with words of knowledge, with faith, healing, working of miracles, or prophecy. These are not lifetime gifts given to individuals, but “eruptions” of the Spirit to accomplish His working. They are not limited to specific gifted individuals, but go to whomever the Spirit wills.

When we look at Jesus and the examples in Acts, preaching is done beside the sea shore (Matt. 4:17–18), in homes (Mark 2:2; Acts 5:42), in synagogues (Acts 9:20), or marketplaces (Acts 17:17–18). We must get away from the modern misconception that preaching is only done behind a pulpit in a gathering of the church by ordained pastors.

Ordinary people preach when they proclaim the good news of the gospel wherever they go.

### CALLING

There is similar confusion around the term “calling.” The biblical use of the word means to bear the name of Christian (1 Pet. 4:16) and to belong to God in Christ (1 Pet. 2:9). God calls people into fellowship with His Son (1 Cor. 1:9), into His kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12), and towards sanctification (1 Pet. 1:15). Saul and Barnabas were called to serve God (Acts 13:2) but chose on their own wisdom to go to Cyprus (13:4). The man from Macedonia called them to come help (Acts 16:9). When they arrived they chose to go to a Jewish place of prayer (16:13). We see that calling is typically to a type of work rather than to a specific location or occupation.

### A BROADER UNDERSTANDING

David took his new understanding into his job as a manager in the world of electronics. He pastored the employees, helping them not only maintain a good work team, but a team that knew and cared for each other as humans. In this environment, his team provided excellent service for their customers, helping them make informed decisions when making purchases. While it took longer and required more investment, customer satisfaction soared and business grew at record levels. As David invested his God-given pastoral abilities, through the empowerment of the Spirit, he was able to serve his employees and create shalom in the work team and in the lives and businesses of their customers. As the team saw David at work, they wanted to know why he was so caring, giving him the chance to proclaim the gospel of Jesus which focuses on being loyal to the Lord, trusting Him even when it makes no sense, obeying

Him by doing righteousness and justice, and looking for provision in the Messiah. David realized that he was fulfilling his calling to ministry by using his gifts in the Lord’s work just as he had when he was pastor. He lived out the truth that work is the gracious expression of YHWH’s creative energy in service of others to create shalom.



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# THE WORKING CHURCH

Walking with  
Grace Community  
Church as they  
learn a theology  
of work.

BY DR. JIM HISLOP



# REDEMPTION GIVES US A WHOLE NEW PERSPECTIVE.

Restoring a biblical understanding of the role of work has been an area of growing concern for me over the last several years. Having grown up in an entrepreneurial home and worked first in the marketplace and then as a pastor, I have personally experienced the tension that comes from viewing life with a sacred/secular divide. I know how difficult it can be for pastors who want to better serve their congregants operating in the sometimes foreign marketplace world. I also understand how meaningless work can feel for those who work Monday through Friday, but don't see how that connects with their Sunday worship.

With this background, I took over direction of the Center for Leadership Development at Western Seminary, with a special focus on creating resources for Christians whose ministry is lived out in the marketplace.

## LEARNING

During this same season, the body of believers at Grace Community Church in Gresham, OR began to address these same issues, discovering that God intended them to work for purpose beyond a paycheck. It began for the entire congregation when the elders and preaching team decided to preach a series of four sermons on work and worship. They preached on work as worship, the limits of labor, work and rest and why work matters.

When the preaching series was over, a number of people expressed a desire for more, so I facilitated an adult class for 10 weeks in the spring and another 10 weeks in the fall, using our newly created Christians in the Marketplace training track. Forty people worked through 20 hours of web-based teaching, covering topics such as the theology of work, the

relationship between theology and economics, and the importance of marketplace mentoring.

Hardly a week went by that a life-changing story wasn't told. Karen, a RN who coordinates care for special needs children, always felt that the only spiritual part of work was when she could share the gospel or pray for people. After the Marketplace class, she realized her work gave her the opportunity to serve people she never would have come in contact with otherwise, and the work itself—providing resources and support for people navigating complicated systems—was a way to contribute to the care and growth of these people. "As a result of the Marketplace class, I feel like my eyes have been opened and I am able to see God partnering with me to bring flourishing to my workplace. I have become much more excited about going to work because I'm on the lookout for what God is going to do." Her deepened understanding has brought about a renewed dedication to the welfare of her colleagues and patients.

Karen's husband, Paul, was impacted in a very different way. As a result of the Marketplace class, Paul concluded that his God-given gifts and skills were not being maximized at his current IT job, to the end of increasing human flourishing. Therefore, he opted to retire early. "Now, I use my gifts to contribute significantly to Grace's partnership with a local elementary school and I use my job skills to help our church move from relief ('doing for') to development ('doing with') in its outreach to the materially poor." Although Karen and Paul's areas of ministry are very different, they are both using their gifts to contribute to those in their sphere of influence in a positive way.



## WORKING IN A FALLEN WORLD

One of the most thoughtful discussions we had in the class came when I posed the question, "When does work show up in the Bible, before or after the Fall?" For far too many, work is seen as punishment for sin, when it is in fact part of God's beautiful, wonderful original design for creatures made in His image. Sin makes work more difficult, but redemption gives us a whole new perspective. "The world of work is broken, painful, toilsome, and frustrating. We are made for work, but in this fallen world we must do that work under conditions we were definitely not made for. The central daily challenge of Christian life for millions of believers is discovering the presence of God in broken work—finding the meaning, dignity and spiritual satisfaction of working to serve God and neighbor in the midst of toil and trial...a sound theology of work must include a theology of suffering and culminate in a message of hope that speaks to all workers" (*The Pastor's Guide to Fruitful Work & Economic Wisdom* 38).

This idea was not foreign to the apostle Paul, who said to household servants in Col. 3:23 and 24, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." One of the class members described their change of thinking this way, "As I've read my Bible, I tried to make sense of how my daily life fit in with God's plan. I was frustrated because my reality didn't fit what I perceived as the life of biblical characters. This class completely changed that. Knowing that God created me to work and that He is my work partner makes me excited to tackle my work day."

## LIGHT BULB MOMENTS

This shift in thinking, of realizing work is part of God's original plan and not a punishment, is one of several "light bulb moments" I saw our class at Grace have (as well as others I have talked with) as their theology of work develops. Others include understanding there is no sacred/secular divide and that ministry does not just mean working for a church or para-church organization.

In keeping with the idea of the original Garden, an illustration I like to use is that we all have "gardens," just like Adam and Eve. We are instructed by God to tend them and make them flourish, using our creativity, our ingenuity and our physical strength. I have a garden called "family," one called "neighborhood," one called "work" and one called "church." The question is, are they flourishing as a result of my tending? That doesn't mean they all have to be functioning perfectly, few-if any-farmers have a bumper crop in every season or in every field. Nevertheless, there should be a sense of God's presence in each of these gardens because I hold them as part of my stewardship under God. Similarly, work will always have struggles in this life, there will always be parts that aren't quite right, but as believers our work can, and ought to be, marked with God's presence.

For the members of Grace Community Church, these conversations on the place work has in the lives of Christians were liberating and dignifying. Understanding that work has value because God gave it value can bring great worth to whatever you are doing. One class member commented, "Marketplace Christians challenged how I have viewed the work world. My value is not determined by where I work or the type of work I do; but rather my

work ethic in that I am called to be working in God's strength in any job situation God places before me." Another said when asked the impact of the class, "I saw my daily career in a new light as part of the work of God's kingdom." Armed with this understanding, I hope to see more and more of those in my "garden of care"—at Grace and elsewhere—living lives that are in harmony and full of meaning in light of God's original plan for their flourishing.

*How can pastors better serve their congregations? Pastor Gerry Smith of Grace Community Church responds on page 16.*



*Dr. Jim Hislop is the Director of Western Seminary's Center for Leadership Development. Formerly a pastor, Jim focused on helping churches through leadership transitions.*



# MINISTERING TO WORKING WOMEN

Statistics say that just over **57%** of working age women and almost **70%** of women with children under the age of 18 work outside the home.

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey*

**Are you effectively ministering to these women?**

Dr. Bev Hislop, Professor of Pastoral Care to Women at Western Seminary, interviewed three professional, Christian women, Diane Paddison, Karen Howells, and Sandra Crawford Williamson, to find out how the church can practically and effectively minister to women who work in the marketplace.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES AND PERCEPTIONS THAT WOMEN WHO ARE EMPLOYED OUTSIDE THE HOME FACE?

**DP:** The number one thing we hear from women is they are longing for authentic community. They want a place where they can be real; where they don't feel like they have to be perfect, like they feel at church, or professional, like they feel at work.

Women also tell us they feel confined or labeled. If a woman hasn't been married or had children, then there is a perception that they haven't reached what God called them to be. Finally, we hear that women often feel like they have been put in competition with each other, rather than put in authentic community to support one another.

**SCW:** Statistics show that 52% of America's workforce is made up of women. Odds are, about half of the women sitting in a pew on Sunday are working outside the home, yet they're camouflaged by their children, their husbands or whatever it may be. For the woman working outside the home, the obvious challenge is balance: I'm a working mom of three, a wife, a daughter, a sister, who is trying to "keep the plates spinning" and still make time with the Lord and spiritual growth a priority. For this to happen, it has to be very intentional and that is a very big challenge.

I'm also very sensitive to what some people lovingly call "The Mommy Wars." Whether a woman works inside the home or outside the home, we're all in this together, trying to bring our kids, neighbors, all lost people to the Lord as we've been commissioned to do. Satan has a field day, I think, pitting us against each other. We're all fallen, sinful creatures, and so our default, if we are not daily plugged into the Holy Spirit, is to try and make ourselves feel better about ourselves by pushing down everybody else.

**KH:** I think women in the marketplace sometimes have an unfair interpretation around them that makes them feel other and alone. This interpretation, often unspoken, says that their commitment to Christ and to their family must be less than if they have pursued a career. Personally, I have felt that so often—especially before my children were grown. I think that some of this stems from a failure to see that the Great Commission and the Great Commandment can, and need to be, lived out in the workplace. These unspoken expectations and judgements often leave working women feeling less than instead of supported and encouraged to live out their calling.

## WHAT ARE WAYS THAT YOU HEAR WOMEN SAY MAKES THEM FEEL INCLUDED AND/OR AFFIRMED BY THEIR CHURCH OR THEIR PASTOR?

**DP:** It's not the words, it is the actions. Show that you see that women have gifts in leadership, show that women can teach a Bible study, or translate that into whatever works in your church.

**KH:** My experience with my own pastor—who is young enough to be my son, by the way—has been fantastic. He has approached me as a person, not a married woman in her 50s who is a mother, but as a whole person. He has looked for where I am on my journey and how he can engage and empower me. This has made me feel cared for, engaged and respected within the church in a way I've never felt before.

**SCW:** Very practically, there are logistical points. When all the women's ministry events are on Wednesday at 10:30 or Saturday morning, the woman who works outside the home doesn't feel like she can plug in. It's also important to consider the environment someone is working in; I face the sinful world every morning in the workplace and that environment needs a certain set of programming, information and encouragement. This environment is very different than that of a woman who works in the home or in the church. We need to be very purposeful and intentional in realizing that there is a whole subset of people in our churches who have a different availability and different experiences, but the same need for fellowship.

**KH:** In response to a survey our church conducted, we changed our annual women's retreat (formerly a whole weekend) to two separate 24 hour retreats during the year. For the women in our church, this arrangement was much more manageable in regards to childcare and work. This was a very simple tweak that gave the women of the church a chance to speak and the leadership an opportunity to listen. In that same vein, I think if pastors would consider doing focus groups to sit and listen, that would be an amazing way to acknowledge and dignify women. It would say "I want to learn and I want to understand what your life is like, because I know that it is difficult out there."

## WHAT DO YOU HEAR WOMEN SAY IS MISSING IN THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITH THEIR CHURCH?

**SCW:** Depending on your church or denomination, you have some women who feel completely invisible inside their church community. We speak with many, many women across the country whose pastors won't even meet with them one-on-one, much less disciple them or get to know them as an individual.

Generally, business topics aren't discussed nearly enough in church. There needs to be examples from the pulpit, in curriculum and on websites, showing that business is not evil and money is not negative. Being successful and running a business is not the antithesis of being a wonderful Christian, whether you are a man or a woman. The Lord has given the gifts necessary to be successful in business.

Another one that is an easy one to address is including women in examples. There is a psychology theory that is expressed through the example of a child, who looks at a photo album and, not seeing their picture in the album by about the third page, puts it down and walks away. Similarly, if a woman who is in the marketplace sits in church and doesn't hear herself or see herself in the story through images and examples, then human psychology will start to tune out. When we inclusively paint people into the picture, we acknowledge them and let them know they belong.

**DP:** Many single, adult women are in their 40s and 50s. Every time I talk with women who are out of their 20s, they all say they feel alone at church. Have a group for singles who are older than 25 or 30. There are a lot of singles—men and women—who don't have anywhere to age into.

## HOW CAN PASTORS COMMUNICATE THAT WOMEN ARE VALUABLE IN WHATEVER ROLE GOD HAS CALLED THEM TO?

**KH:** Women have always worked: alongside their families in agrarian culture, selling food, going to the market, etc. In my understanding, it wasn't until the 1950's, after the war, that we were given (by the media) the image of the woman vacuuming with pearls on, posed as the alternative to the working woman. Prior to that, women were in the industrial revolution, they were in the war effort and they were on the farm, working. With this in mind, I think we need to be a little more accurate in our history, and the fact that women have always been leading and contributing to society in a way that helps society flourish. To hear that from the pulpit would be amazing; I really first heard it coming to Western CLD events and it was huge for me. It dignified me and gave me more confidence and passion to speak about work in a theological way.

**DP:** When we think about serving, we are all given gifts and we're told in 1 Peter 4:10-11 that God gives us these specific gifts and we're to use them with all our strength to serve Him. He also calls us to be in relationship with others and serve others. Earlier in my career, I had 4,500 employees in my organization that I oversaw. This gave me the opportunity to serve 4,500 people in a way that hopefully demonstrated a Christ-like difference in my leadership. I wouldn't have had that opportunity in any other arena.

## WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL THINGS THAT PASTORS COULD DO OR SAY TO MAKE WOMEN FEEL MORE INCLUDED AND VISIBLE?

**DP:** Just as pastors call missionaries who are going overseas for mission work up front to pray over them, call men and women who are going into the mission field at their workplace up front. This gives a visual that we are all called to the mission field, wherever it may be.

**KH:** I notice when women are up front right away, whether they are reading scripture or serving the elements with the pastor. When we see ourselves represented, we can identify and feel engaged, not alone.

**SCW:** I had 15 years as a post-college, single, professional woman trying desperately to stay plugged in to church. Week after week, no one would acknowledge me and I felt invisible. Acknowledgement certainly comes in the forms that Karen and Diane mentioned above, but also, there can be a great benefit in acknowledging something out loud, just saying that "We know that 51% of adult women in America are single and there have got to be some of you out there. This is your church too!" Say it in the bulletin, say it on the website, say it from the pulpit; identify these women, inspire these women, and then give them an opportunity to connect and take part.

**DP:** It also can be as easy as pointing people towards resources. Anytime you can do that, you show you know about the problem and want to help. If you promote the resources that are out there, then people are going to realize that you care that they are in the workforce.

**For more information about 4word and the resources they offer, see page 19.**

## CONTRIBUTORS



### Bev Hislop

*Dr. Bev Hislop is Professor of Pastoral Care to Women at Western Seminary. She is the author of "Shepherding a Woman's Heart" and "Shepherding Women in Pain." Bev has over 20 years of experience in leading and extending care to women, both in churches and communities.*



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# A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE



## PASTOR GERRY SMITH

Gerry is the Community Care Pastor and an Elder at Grace Community Church in Gresham, OR, as well as an alumnus of Western Seminary.

Grace Community Church recently completed a sermon series called *Work and Worship*, followed by a small group study that utilized Western Seminary's Christians in the Marketplace track. The church leadership team realized that the congregation was ready and eager to talk openly about this topic. In the past, we had touched on work as worship as it came up in the normal preaching cycle, though I think we were a little surprised that this series was so popular and had such an impact on the congregation. The ensuing class also had a huge impact. We saw the class members go through a transition, from grumbling that they were overworked and underpaid, to rejoicing at all the opportunities they had now to incarnate Christ in the workplace. Their countenances changed as they realized that the work they were doing matters to the kingdom.

Following the series, we have been working to get rid of language that elevates "ministry" over "work." Phrases like "the work of ministry" are misleading and only serve to illustrate a divide between work and ministry that shouldn't exist. Phrases like "professional ministry" also contribute to this divide. We are working to erase those from our language.

We have also made more of an effort to pray for and bless those who work outside the church. Last fall, we had all those involved in the education of children (private schools, public institutions and homeschool) stand as we prayed for their year: that God would bring His kingdom on earth through their work in our communities. In that same vein, we have also been working with a local school to bless those who teach—very much speaking about working together for our community.

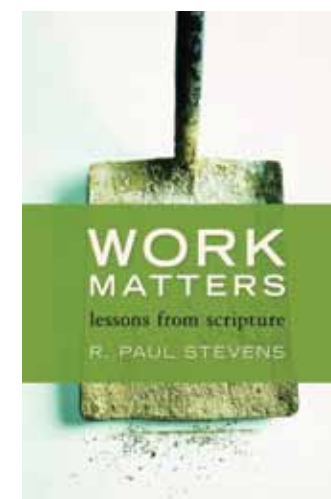
Even now, the class continues to impact our programming. We have started another class made up of our outreach and benevolence teams that is looking at ways to communicate the theology of work—that work is valuable and a part of how God has designed us—to those who come to the church looking for financial help and who are more frequently underemployed or living dependent on the government.

Personally, developing my own theology of work has encouraged me to think broader about my role as a pastor. As the church has grown in size, I am continually confronting the old model that says the paid pastor is the only one reaching out or working for God. I am now calling all to worship God by being trustworthy, hardworking, and fair in their places of employment. As a pastor, I make more of an effort to meet my congregation in their places of employment as well, showing them value in their work contexts. In that same way, I also work to include their voices in the oversight of church ministries. I would encourage all pastors to bring value to the work that their congregations are doing in their communities. Meet them where they work, pray for them corporately, help them apply a biblical theology of work in their work environments and rejoice with them when they get it right.

# WORK MATTERS: LESSONS FROM SCRIPTURE

R. PAUL STEVENS PRESENTS A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF WORK THAT RISES OUT OF THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE. HE BEGINS WITH GENESIS AND CONTINUES THROUGH REVELATION, LEADING READERS IN AN EXPLORATION OF THE THEME OF WORK.

## REVIEW BY DR. J. CARL LANEY



Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture

R. Paul Stevens | Eerdmans, 2012

Of the four books on the subject of work I have read in the last eight months, R. Paul Stevens' *Work Matters*, is on the top of my list. Stevens is Professor Emeritus of Marketplace Theology and Leadership at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Regent College webpage describes him as follows: "Dr. Stevens is a craftsman with wood, words, and images and has worked as a carpenter, a student counselor, a pastor, and a professor. His personal mission is to empower the

whole people of God to integrate their faith and life from Monday to Sunday." Stevens is the author of several other books including *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* and *Taking Your Soul to Work: Overcoming the Nine Deadly Sins of the Workplace*. Here is what I appreciated about Steven's most recent book, *Work Matters*:

First, Stevens presents a biblical theology of work that rises out of the canon of Scripture. He begins with Genesis and continues through Revelation, leading readers in an exploration of the theme of work. Each section of the book begins with an introduction which provides a preview of what will be addressed in the following chapters: God-Given Work (The First Five Books), Stewardship Work (Historical Books), Soul Work (Wisdom Books), Just Work (The Prophets), and Kingdom Work (The New Testament).

Second, the chapters are relatively short—six to seven pages. Never once did I wonder when I would come to the end of the chapter. I was left longing for more rather than enduring a lengthy discourse.

Third, Stevens is obviously well read on the subject. He includes frequent quotations from other

authors addressing the subject of work. The book includes an extensive bibliography for further research and study.

Fourth, the book is biographical in nature, focusing on biblical characters and what we can learn from their interaction with the subject of work. Readers can easily identify with the biblical characters and what their lives teach us about the subject of work.

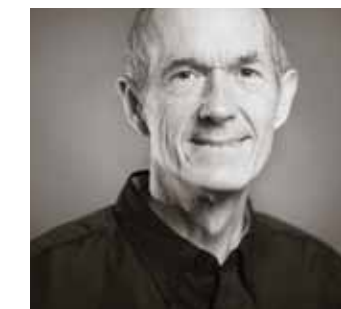
Fifth, each chapter includes nicely stated principles summarizing what we can learn from the inspiring examples of the characters studied. These serve as the takeaways for each chapter.

Finally, discussion and reflection questions accompany each chapter. These questions are personal, practical and probing. They are designed to encourage discussion and would make this book very suitable for group study.

The only chapter which I believe fell short of the mark was Stevens' discussion of "Enigmatic Work" in the book of Ecclesiastes. He captured the problem being addressed—the futility of work—but didn't adequately develop Qohelet's divinely inspired and often repeated solution: to eat, drink and enjoy God's gift of life (Ecc. 2:24; 3:12,22; 4:18, 8:15; 9:7; 11:9).

Most people will spend 40 hours a week of their adult lives working. Stevens' *Work Matters* will help readers understand how their work matters to God and can advance His kingdom purposes. It is an engaging and potentially life-changing book!

This review originally appeared on [www.transformedblog.com](http://www.transformedblog.com).



Dr. Carl Laney is Professor of Biblical Literature at Western Seminary and has authored numerous books, including most recently, "Loving Your Enemy: A Biblical Alternative to Revenge" (Ministry: International Journal for Pastors, July 2011).

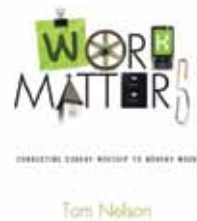


# RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

## BOOKS

WORK MATTERS: CONNECTING SUNDAY WORSHIP TO MONDAY WORK

**Tom Nelson | Crossway, 2011**



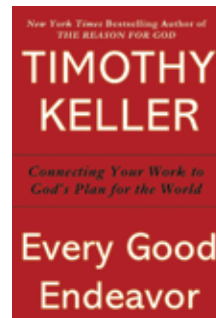
Pastor Tom Nelson offers practical wisdom and a theological outline for the purpose of work. Nelson's engaging and encouraging writing style makes this an excellent introduction to a theology of work.

KINGDOM CALLING

**Amy Sherman | IVP Books, 2011**



In this frequently referenced book, Amy Sherman suggests stewarding vocation "to announce the kingdom of God to our everyday world." Full of examples and stories of people who are already living out this truth, this book is a great place to look for ways to integrate a theology of work into your life.



EVERY GOOD ENDEAVOR

**Timothy Keller with Katherine Leary Alsdorf | Riverhead Books, 2014**

Pastor Tim Keller and Center for Faith and Work founder Katherine Leary Alsdorf develop a theological framework for work, showing "how excellence, integrity, discipline, creativity, and passion in the workplace can...be considered acts of worship."



BUSINESS FOR THE COMMON GOOD: A CHRISTIAN VISION FOR THE MARKETPLACE

**Kenman Wong and Scott Rae | IVP Academic, 2011**

Wong (Professor of Business Ethics at Seattle Pacific University) and Rae (Professor of Christian Ethics at Talbot School of Theology) provide valuable insight into real-world problems, starting each chapter with a scenario that challenges readers to think on how faith and work might actually integrate when put to the test.

## VIDEOS



GOING ON VOCATION

**Christian History Institute**

"If we don't connect our faith to the world of work, Christianity becomes a leisure activity that we squeeze in when we're not working." In this video series, individuals and groups seeking a biblical foundation for work can explore ways in which work can be redeemed and your job can become your calling.



FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD: LETTERS TO THE EXILES

**Acton Institute**

What is our salvation for? This video series explores the larger picture of how God's economy brings purpose to every area of our lives, including: family, work, art, education, and government. There are seven sessions in this series, each about 20 minutes.



REFRAME

**Regent College and The Washington Institute for Faith, Vocation & Culture**

This series is designed for a group context, examining real life scenarios of Christians working out their faith in their whole lives, and what it means to follow Christ in the modern era. There are 10 sessions in this series, about 40 minutes each.

## ORGANIZATIONS



WESTERN SEMINARY CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

[www.westernseminary.edu/cld](http://www.westernseminary.edu/cld)

Western's Center for Leadership Development offers the Christians in the Marketplace non-credit certificate, designed to help individuals or small groups develop an understanding of God's view of work and incorporate that knowledge into their 40 hour work week.

Courses such as Theology of Work, Theology and Economics, and Implementing a Theology of Work build a strong foundation, encouraging you to think biblically about faith, work and the economy so you are equipped to live for God in a world that doesn't.



4WORD

[www.4wordwomen.org](http://www.4wordwomen.org)

4word is a national organization serving professional Christian women by providing resources to help them navigate and develop their career, relationships and faith. The vision of 4word is that women will see faith as foundational, relationships as priority, and work as the place where God has divinely gifted them to serve, so they may impact the world eternally. Through connection, leadership and support, 4word hopes to help women in the workplace achieve their God-given potential.

Local chapters provide places for connection amongst women, and a mentorship program provides opportunities for young women to learn from godly women well into their careers.



OIKONOMIA NETWORK

[www.oikonomianetwork.org](http://www.oikonomianetwork.org)

The Oikonomia Network is a learning community of theological educators and evangelical seminaries. Created by The Kern Family Foundation in 2009, the mission of the Network is to "prepare future pastors to connect biblical wisdom, sound theology, and good stewardship to work and the economy."

Through major partnerships with numerous national seminaries, the Network is trying to equip future pastors with a more biblical understanding of work.



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