



## **Created to Work & Rest for the Glory of God**

### ***The Story of Scripture – Part 10***

Today I want to take us in a direction that is totally different from what I had been thinking about this week. So over the course of our Bible reading in the past few weeks, specifically in Exodus, we have seen God's command to rest on the Sabbath no less than five different times. In various conversations with many of you, people have asked, "What does that mean for us today? God seemed pretty serious about this back then. Are we supposed to set aside a day for rest? If so, what day, and what does that look like? What do we rest from?"

As soon as we start thinking about rest, that inevitably leads us to think about work and what God says about work. Both of these are pretty critical topics in our lives. Think about it. The majority in this church spends a significant portion of your week at a place of work, doing a job. I'm including students in school here; I'm including those who may be moms working at home with children, or men and women working at home for any other reason.

If you work 40 hours a week for 40 years of your life, then you will put in over 80,000 hours at a job during your lifetime. If you go to college, then from kindergarten to college is another 15,000 hours preparing to work. Then there's commuting on top of that, which we know is sky high around here. So you could double some of these numbers. But if you add it all together, that's a lot of hours.

I think many Christians wonder, "How do all these hours fit in God's purpose for my life and His purpose in the world?" Is your work in sales, or as a teacher, engineer, lobbyist or whatever you do just a way to put food on the table or is there more to it than that? We say all the time that God has created you for the spread of His glory among the nations. So how does your job fit into that plan?

Most people in this church family are not pastors or missionaries. You're working in what we often call a "secular" profession. Does that mean you're relegated to a minor role in this great commission we quote at the end of every service? Or is your job only significant if you have a Bible study with your co-workers on your lunch break? Or do you sometimes think, "I do this job for a living during the week, then I serve God by doing this or that on the weekends or on week nights"?

So you spend hours at various jobs, then you add rest on top of that. Think about those hours. Studies show that we will spend between 20 and 30 years of our lives asleep. About a third of your life is spent like you're dead. What is that about? God didn't have to design us like this. We're made in His

image and He doesn't sleep. So why did He imagine this for us? We could have been created in a way that we would never have to sleep. Think of all we could do. We could all have two jobs and never feel tired. Every one of us could have a ministry job and a secular job. We could accomplish so much. Why do we have to sleep? What a waste of time.

Beyond sleep, is there any other type of rest that's important? When it comes down to it, you spend a lot of time working and a lot of time resting. So my question is how do you do both for the glory of God? It seems like a pretty important question, right? As we are reading through the Bible, Exodus 31 jumped out to me. As I have prayed for you, I have not been able to get past this, so I want to go back to this chapter in our reading from a couple weeks ago and I want us to hear what God says about work and rest for His glory in our lives. Let's read it together. This is the Word of God—Exodus 31:

*<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>“See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, <sup>3</sup>and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, <sup>4</sup>to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, <sup>5</sup>in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. <sup>6</sup>And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: <sup>7</sup>the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, <sup>8</sup>the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, <sup>9</sup>and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, <sup>10</sup>and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, <sup>11</sup>and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do.”*

*<sup>12</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, <sup>13</sup>“You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. <sup>14</sup>You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. <sup>15</sup>Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. <sup>16</sup>Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. <sup>17</sup>It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”*

*<sup>18</sup>And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.*

So let's think together what the Bible is teaching us here, and in other places, about God, work and rest. The picture here in Exodus 31 is that God has given instructions for building the tabernacle, this place where the glory of God would dwell among His people. There was a ton of work to be done—sawing, sewing, wood carving, metal working, stone cutting and so on—but Moses was not the man for all those jobs. If Moses was anything like me, he was not the man for any of those jobs. I am totally

incompetent when it comes to construction or repair. When I mentioned that in the 9:00 gathering, my wife over here just started laughing out loud. I could recognize her laugh, because she knows how true that is. She can testify to my complete incompetence and uselessness.

## **God delights in work and has designed us to work.**

God calls out these two men—Bezalel and Oholiab—who have the abilities, intelligence, knowledge, craftsmanship and artistry to make the tabernacle a reality. So in the first half of this chapter we see that God delights in work and has designed us to work. We see this all over the Bible. On a side note, there's a great book written by a couple friends of mine—Greg Gilbert and Sebastian Traeger—called The Gospel at Work. I would highly recommend this book and I'm going to pull a couple different points from it today.

Just think how, as you've been reading the Bible these last few weeks, we have seen the truth that God delights in work. From the very beginning of the Bible, we see God Himself working, creating, forming. Psalm 104:31 says, “...*may the Lord rejoice in his works.*” God delights in work and this plays out in two particular ways in relation to us.

First, God works for us. That's what's happening in the beginning of the Bible. God is creating man and woman. He's providing for them, nourishing them, sustaining them—and He continues to do so. The only reason you are breathing right now is because God is working for you. If He were to stop, so would you. We see this here in Exodus 31. Did you catch the language in verse three? God says of Bezalel, “*I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship.*”

Why does Bezalel have these gifts? “Because I gave them to him,” God says. Every gift you have for your work comes from God. We are able to work because God works for us. There might be some—maybe many—who think, “I get up early, I stay up late. I studied hard in school. I've worked hard to get where I am.” I don't doubt that, but where did you get the energy to work hard? Who gave you the mind to study in school? The only reason you have what you have is because God in His grace has worked for you and is working for you—even when you don't acknowledge Him.

God works for us by His grace and God works through us. Follow this: Since God is working for us, then the work we do is actually work God is doing through us. Think about it in terms of Exodus 31. God could have built this tabernacle all by Himself, without using Bezalel or Oholiab or anybody else. But He chose to work through them, and—get this—God chooses to work through you and me. That's a pretty breathtaking thought.

I love the way German reformer Martin Luther put this:

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to give us this day our daily bread—and He does give us our daily bread. How does He do this, though? He does it by means of the

farmer who planted and harvested the grain, the baker who made the flour into bread and the person who prepared our meal. God could easily give you grain and fruit without our plowing and planting, but He does not want to do so. Instead, God works for us by working through us.

Which is why from the very beginning of the Bible, what did God do? Remember Genesis 2:15? *“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”* Do you see this? God created you and me to work. Remember, this is before sin entered the world. Work was not a result of sin. Instead, from the very beginning of creation, work was a part of God’s good design for us, a fundamental part of who we are.

I love what Tim Keller says in another excellent book on work called Every Good Endeavor:

Work is so foundational to our makeup that it’s one of the few things we can take in significant doses without harm. Indeed, the Bible does not say we should work one day and rest six, or that work and rest should be balanced evenly. It directs us to the opposite ration. Leisure and pleasure are great goods, but we can only take so much of them. If you ask people in nursing homes or hospitals how they’re doing, you will oftentimes hear that their main regret is that they wished they had something to do, some way to be useful to others. Why? Because God’s good design for our lives involves work.

This is so important to understand. I think many people, even in the church—maybe even especially in the church—view work almost like it’s a necessary evil in the world, something we have to endure in order to make money and get by. Some people have to suffer through menial, less-important jobs in order to make that money, but it’s just kind of what we have to do in this world.

That kind of thinking is totally unbiblical. Work is a foundational part of the good design of God for our lives. We are made in God’s image and just as He is a working Creator, we are working creatures. This brings dignity to any and every kind of work we do—unless that work is sinful, of course. So stealing cars and selling drugs would not be included as God-glorifying work. But assuming your work doesn’t go against God’s Word, no matter what you’re doing in work, you are reflecting the image of God—and that is glorifying to God. That makes every type of valid work important.

Here in Exodus 31, Moses had a role to play; so did Bezalel and Oholiab and all kinds of other people who were involved in this project. Each one of them was important. Think about this today. It’s a good thing that all kinds of people in our church do all kinds of different work—and all are important. If all of us were pastors like me, that would be a horrible thing for sustenance in this world. Sure, we’d know how to teach the Bible, but we wouldn’t know how to do anything else. If we were all salesmen and saleswomen, we wouldn’t have any products to sell. If we were all police officers, we’d be safe, but we’d also be hungry. If all were politicians or lawyers, well, we’d all be in trouble and we would never get along. We need each other—every single one of us.

Listen to what one author says. I read this and thought, “What a great picture of how important every one of our jobs is.” He writes:

Look at the chair you're lounging in. Could you have made it for yourself? How would you get the wood? Go and fell a tree? But only after first making the tools for that, putting together some kind of vehicle to haul the wood, constructing a mill to do the lumber and roads to drive on from place to place. In short, a lifetime or two to make one chair.

If we worked, not 40, but 140 hours per week, we couldn't make for ourselves from scratch even a fraction of all the goods and services we now call our own. Our paycheck turns out to buy us the use of far more than we could possibly make for ourselves in the time it takes to earn the check. Work yields far more in return upon our efforts than our particular jobs put in.

Imagine that everyone quits working right now. What happens? Civilized life quickly melts away. Food vanishes from the shelves. Gas dries up at the pumps. Streets are no longer patrolled and fires burn themselves out. Communication and transportation services end. Utilities go dead. Those who survive at all are soon huddled around campfires, sleeping in caves, clothed in raw animal hides. The difference between a wilderness and culture is simply work.

All human work, however lowly the world might deem it to be, is dignified because it reflects the glory of our working God. This is critical for us to understand, so that we don't ever set up some false dichotomy, some artificial distinction between some whose work is more noble than others, such as pastors being more noble than bankers or missionaries more noble than telemarketers.

William Tyndale, another reformer in the church who translated the Bible into the language of the common people, said, “If we look externally, there is a difference between washing dishes and preaching the Word of God. But as touching to please God, there is no difference at all.” That's a biblical view of work. There's no difference, when done in the honor of the Lord, between preaching and washing the dishes.

You ask, “Do you really believe that preaching and washing the dishes are just as important to the glory of God?” Absolutely I believe that. You take something like house cleaning. Imagine: what if it's not done? Before long, there are germs all over the house, viruses and infections that threaten to make you and me sick and that eventually could kill us—house work is absolutely, fundamentally important. Work of all kinds is dignified, a part of God's beautiful design for our lives. God sustains us by working for us and through us in all kinds of ways.

## **God is the Author of rest and commands us to rest.**

So what about God and rest? God is the Author of rest and He commands us to rest. After six days of making a world, what did He do? He took a break. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us:

*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 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. 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.*

Then, as we read in the Ten Commandments, God told His people to do the same. Exodus 20:8-11 says:

*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. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

So now Exodus 31 makes it clear that this day of rest was really important. It was central to God's people, not just something on the side. So even though the work of Bezalel and Oholiab on the tabernacle was extremely important, they were not to be so consumed with that work that they could not put it aside. They were to keep the Sabbath or they would die. God is the Author of rest and He commands us to rest from physical labor in our lives.

We'll talk more in a few moments about the extent to which this command and the way it played out in the Old Testament—in the old covenant between God and the Israelites—applies to our lives today. But in God's example and command, we see a clear priority on resting from physical labor in our lives—and not just resting from physical labor but resting with total trust in His love.

Did you catch how God gave this command to His people for their good? The purpose of the Sabbath in Exodus 31:13 is, *"That you might know that I, the Lord, sanctify you."* In other words, "I, the Lord, have set you apart as My people, that you may know Me." God had entered into a covenant relationship with His people, like a marriage. The sabbath was the day to set aside work and rest in Him, trusting His love for them. They would be tempted to think, "Oh, we need to work. We need to sow or reap in the fields. We need to do this or that." God said, "Trust Me. I will take care of you. Set aside this day to rest in Me, to trust in Me, to grow in your knowledge of Me and My love for you, and I will provide for you."

What a great gift! Now this passage starts to make sense. We wonder why the penalty for breaking the Sabbath was so severe. One writer put it this way:

The penalty seems harsh, but not when we realize what the Sabbath was intended to do. By not keeping the Sabbath, the Israelite was showing that he or she was not interested in knowing God. Breaking the Sabbath was an act of defiant rebellion. It was a repudiation of the covenant. It was a way of saying to God, "My relationship with You is not important to me. You are not worth the time it would take to get to know You."

This starts to make sense when it comes to rest for us. Rest involves trust in God. When we put aside work, we say, “I don’t have to be working all the time. I set aside time specifically to focus on You, to grow in knowledge of and relationship with You, God. And I trust You to provide for me.” The problem, though, is that sin has entered the world—a lack of trust in God. This is where we realize that sin has affected both our work and our rest. Remember Genesis 3:17-19? Right after sin entered the world, God said to Adam:

*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; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 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.*

So this good gift from God called “work” becomes something that’s not so good that we experience in work. Work was designed to be fulfilling for us, but because of sin in the world, God says work will be frustrating—something I’m guessing we’ve all experienced. Students, do you ever get frustrated with school?

One of my favorite quotes from one of our kids. In the heat of a tense moment when he was working on math, we said, “Son, you have to do your math.” He replied in an exasperated voice, “This is not math. This is torture.”

School is frustrating, work is frustrating, every type of job can be frustrating. Even those who thoroughly enjoy their jobs find themselves frustrated at times. School or work can even feel pointless. Listen to the author of Ecclesiastes, when he talks about how we try to do meaningful things, but when we come to the end, it’s like it’s all for nothing. Ecclesiastes 2:18-23 says:

*I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun.... What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation.*

Ecclesiastes is a pretty depressing book in the Bible, but it’s real. It’s something we can identify with. We have those moments when we think, “What’s the point? Why am I doing this?” The process of work can become pretty self-centered. Think about the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. The workers were constructing a building to make a name for themselves, which is the name of the game in the working world, right? Assert yourself over and above others. Cutthroat competition. In all of this, we are prone to sin in two broad general categories. I’m pulling these from The Gospel at Work book. This is so helpful.

One, we are prone to make an idol of work. This happens when we over-value work, thinking it will provide us with ultimate meaning. When you spend thousands of hours at work, there’s an obvious

temptation to be consumed and controlled by work in a way that's not healthy, in a way that looks at our work as a source of identity and as a source of meaning. We can wrap ourselves up in work to the point where it becomes the primary object of our passion, energy and devotion, oftentimes to the exclusion of our families or the church, and most importantly, to the exclusion of our intimacy with God.

This is particularly dangerous if we are successful in our jobs. Just so you know, this is just as much a temptation for me as it is for any worker in any job. If we're not careful, we can end up looking to our jobs for things that God alone can provide. When we look to work like this, then we resist rest. We can't put our work aside. We can't put our phones down. We're always checking emails; always making calls. We're constantly consumed by this or that in our work. We can't get it out of our minds. We see rest almost like an enemy—an impediment to us being able to get more done.

I'll be the first to admit guilt here. It's a wake-up call I'm so thankful my wife gave me at a particularly important moment in my life and in our marriage, when she said, "David, you don't sleep. You don't eat some meals. Because you're working, there's always more and more and more that you see needs to be done. You don't stop." She was right. I was idolizing my job in a way I'm guessing many of you are idolizing your jobs. You might not say that or admit it out loud, but if you look at the pattern of your thoughts and your lack of rest and your focus and its implications in your life, it's true. It's what we do when we over-value work.

Secondly, we are prone to be idle in work. Now, there's an opposite end of the spectrum. Some of you are already thinking, "We don't want to be lazy and not do anything." You're exactly right. The other sinful distortion of work is we are prone to be idle in work. This happens when we under-value work, thinking it has little to no meaning. This plays out in different ways. For some, this looks like laziness. There are some people who have the ability to work 40-50 hours a week, but they aren't working. Obviously I'm not referring here to people who have lost their jobs and are actively looking for work. Others of you are suffering from some sort of disability that keeps you from work.

Instead, I'm referring here to people like those Paul addresses in 2 Thessalonians when a lot of people had quit their jobs, saying, "Jesus could come back any day, so we don't need to work." Paul writes an entire book in the Bible to say, "Get a job." He says in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "*If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.*" The Bible commands us to work and earn a living as we are able. Remember that God's command was to work six days and rest one, not the reverse. So there's laziness included here.

But when we talk about idleness in work—under-valuing work—we also need to think about the tendency to work, yet we see little to no meaning in that work. We see work as drudgery that we have to do. So either we don't work, or we work and we don't care about our work. The result is a whole host of emotions that we identify with work: joylessness, complaining, discontentment, dissatisfaction, discouragement, dreading Monday mornings. And in the middle of it all, we lose sight of God's purpose



for our work and the glory God receives in us doing that work well, no matter how menial we or others might think it is.

When we miss this, do you know what we do in our country and our culture in particular? Too many people see work as something to be avoided or endured until the next opportunity for recreation. Just get through the week. Ultimately we just try to get through life, exalting retirement as the goal. In a sense we prioritize rest. Work is something we endure until we get to the weekend. And in a larger sense, until we finally attain the goal of not having to work, so we can retire. It's a concept in which, if we're not careful, we'll miss God's good design for work in our lives.

I want to be clear here. I'm not talking about those who are physically unable to work and I'm not talking about people who retire from a job in order to be able to do work that doesn't require a paycheck. There are many people across this church who are past a certain age and who are no longer employed on a payroll somewhere but are working for the glory of God in this city and around the world in all kinds of different ways. That is extremely glorifying to God.

I was talking with Gene Hunt from Prince William campus this week. He was telling me that he recently retired and shared about all kinds of things he is doing here in DC and around the world. I think about Ron and Carol Bowen. Ron is a lay pastor who wrote a book called Soaring Into Heaven about the critical role seniors can play in the spread of the gospel during retirement years, resulting in the glory of God being made known. I read an article this week about a woman who started a 550-week Bible study that is being used by kids and adults across Africa. She started the Bible study project when she was 75 years old. She's now 90.

All this to say, this idea we have in American culture that the goal of our lives is to get to the point where we no longer work is not what God has designed for us. We'll even say, "I can't wait to rest in heaven." But while there will be rest, there will also be work in heaven. We might hear that, throw up our arms and think, "It's never going to end!" But that's when we realize that we're missing the point. God has designed us to work in good ways. Work is a good gift from a gracious God that we will enjoy for all of eternity.

The difference is that in heaven there won't be sin, so there won't be this frustration and struggle we associate with work. The key is that we must be careful not to buy into the lie our culture sells that work is to be avoided—to be endured because we have to do it—until we don't have to do it anymore. No, work is a fundamental of God's good design for us. God desires to save us from an unbiblical view of work and redeem us to a satisfying life of work in this world.

This leads us to the gospel work and rest. The gospel is the good news that although we have all sinned against God, God has sent His Son Jesus to die on a cross for our sins, to rise from the grave in victory over sin, so that anyone, anywhere, who turns from sin and trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord of their life will be forgiven all their sin and reconciled to a relationship with God.

How does that good news—the gospel—affect the way we work and rest? I am so glad you asked. There are three ways in particular.

### **The gospel secures our salvation, freeing us to rest in Jesus' finished work.**

In light of this picture of the Sabbath in Exodus 31, listen to this in Colossians 2:16-17: *“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”* Do you hear what the Bible just said? The Sabbath was set up by God as a shadow to point us to Christ. What we're seeing as we read through the Bible is that it is all pointing us to Jesus. This picture of rest from labor and trust in God's love in the old covenant is intended to point us to rest from labor and trust in God's love in the new covenant in Jesus.

It's no surprise, then, to hear Jesus come on the scene in Matthew 11:28 and say, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* The author of Hebrews in the New Testament, speaking about those who trust in Jesus, says this in Hebrews 4:9-10: *“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.”* This is the gospel. Hear it. There is no amount of work you can do to save you from your sins and make you right with God. Salvation from your sins and a relationship with God comes through resting in Jesus as your Savior. This is so big.

This is why Martin Luther, who I mentioned earlier, was so passionate about all work, not just church work, being seen as equally glorifying to God. Think about it. If our work—specifically our religious works—earn us some kind of favor before God, then it's easy to think leaders in the church do the most noble work and have the most favor before God, while everybody else is kind of second class. But Luther realized that if every one of us is acceptable before God, solely based on faith in the finished work of Jesus, then there is no amount of work we can do, no kind of work we can do, to increase our status before God. Jesus at the cross has secured our salvation, which means we are free to rest in His work as the only superior work.

Please hear this. This Bible is teaching that the point of Sabbath rest in the Old Testament is to point us to the rest we find in Jesus as Savior in the New Testament. This is the life-transforming truth that some of you need to hear today. You cannot work your way to God, but the good news is God has worked His way to you. God has sent Jesus to pay the price for your sins, so that when you rest, when you trust in His love for you, you can be saved from your sins and fulfilled. You can find meaning in a relationship with the God of the universe. In the words of Augustine in the fourth century, *“You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.”* Supreme rest can be yours in relationship with God through faith in Jesus and His finished work on your behalf.

## **The gospel secures our satisfaction, freeing us from the idolatry of work.**

This changes everything about our view of work in this world, because the gospel doesn't just secure our salvation—the gospel secures our satisfaction, freeing us from the idolatry of work. When you trust in Jesus, you are reconciled to God, which means you have found ultimate meaning in God. Your ultimate source of joy is not in what you do, but in Who you know. Your identity is not in your job your identity is in Jesus Christ. My identity is not pastor of McLean Bible Church; my identity is son of God. Your identity is not this or that profession; your identity is that you are an adopted child of God. That means jobs come and go, but this stays the same forever.

Think about how this changes everything, because now you are free from looking to your job to find what Jesus has already purchased for you—ultimate joy, ultimate meaning, ultimate satisfaction in Him. Gilbert and Traeger write, “Christ’s work provides an anchor for your soul. Without it, it’s inevitable that you will be blown around like a leaf by the winds of stock market gyrations, temporary successes and failures, performance reports, bosses who do or don’t treat you well, and your own desires, whether they are met or not.” Jesus frees you from that kind of life.

Will you experience frustration, discouragement and despair at work? Sure, you will. It’s the reality of work in a sinful world. But just as soon as you do, those realities will remind you that your work is not your source of meaning, not your source of joy, not your source of satisfaction, not your identity. Jesus is, and He alone can provide all your soul most needs and desires. So let frustration in your work drive you to satisfaction in Jesus. Your boss is not your source of joy. That’s good news. Jesus is your source of joy.

## **The gospel secures our significance, freeing us from idleness in work.**

Jesus infused significance, meaning and purpose into all we do, including even the most menial of tasks and jobs. It’s as if Jesus is addressing this speaker in Ecclesiastes and saying, “You’re right. Your work is pointless in this world, if this world is all there is to it. But there’s more to it. There is a God Who loves you and has designed you and your work for His glory, and I have made a way for you to experience His eternal purpose in your day-to-day job.”

This then leads us to the “So What?” of this picture. So what does this mean for your life on Monday morning? Here’s the encouragement I want to give you.

## **By the grace of God, work diligently to display the character of God.**

By the grace of God, based on the Word of God, work diligently to display the character of God. It’s obvious that Bezalel and Oholiab in Exodus 31 were given work to do in the construction of the tabernacle that would be for the display of God’s glory and character. But this is where I want you to see that you have been given the work you have to do this week for the same purpose.

Listen to God's Word to you 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."* Do you hear what the Bible is saying here? In everything you do, including your work, the Bible is saying, "You are bringing glory to God because you are serving the Lord Jesus Christ." Worship is not just singing; worship is working all week long. When you work, no matter what you do, Who are you ultimately working for? For the Lord. Verse 24: *"You are serving the Lord Christ."*

No matter what job you are in, no matter what work you do, you are not ultimately working for this boss or that employer. You're working for God and that changes everything about how you work. Talk about meaning and purpose in work. Now you realize that what you do 9:00 to 5:00 every day is not secular work and what you do when you serve the church on Sunday is spiritual work. No, it's all work to the glory of God—every bit of it. Be encouraged in this.

When you are writing a memo at your desk this week, when you're talking on the phone with a customer, when you're preparing a lesson for your class, when you're selling an item, serving food, making decisions, managing a company, placing an order, hammering a nail, fixing a leak, performing a surgery—whatever you do—you are worshiping God as you work. You are literally serving Jesus.

Discipleship to Jesus is not just what you do when you have a Bible study or serve in the soup kitchen. Yes, it's that, plus it's every other detail of your life on a daily basis. This totally changes your life and the way you view your work. So work with excellence and integrity, with respect for those around you, with your eyes fixed on Jesus above you.

I find Gilbert and Traeger really helpful here. They tie this back to sin's distortion of our work and ask:

Do you ever experience satisfaction or enjoyment in your work? If not, it might be worth thinking about why you don't. Do you lack enjoyment in your job because you idolize it, expecting it to do things for you that only Jesus can do? Or is it because you've lost sight of the purposes for which God has called you to work in the first place, and you've become idle in your work? You don't necessarily have to enjoy the mechanics of what you do in order to find a measure of enjoyment and satisfaction in your work.

Maybe your job is cleaning out the grease pits in a hydraulics factory and you work in a non-air-conditioned metal warehouse in the brutal 110-degree heat of east Texas. Hardly anyone can be expected to enjoy the mechanics of that particular job. Yet if this describes your work, you can still find satisfaction and enjoyment in it by doing your job well and knowing you are doing it for the King's glory and as an expression of love for Him.

Our memory verse this week was Deuteronomy 6:4-5: *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."* See that work is a way to love God with all your heart, soul and might. The second commandment is like it, Jesus says, to love your neighbor as yourself. Think about the good others

receive from your work. Your work leads to the support of your family and provides resources for you to give others. And not just that. All work in God's good design is for the good of others.

Go back to the guy in the grease pits of the hydraulics factory. This is a guy who's working long hours every week in what many would call a menial task so that factory can run, so it can serve people in all the important ways it does. Our jobs are extremely important avenues for loving people in the world. We love people by working in all the different ways we do. Think about that old cliché, that nobody gets to the end of their life and wishes they'd spent more time at the office. To a certain extent that's true, especially when we resist rest. But if we're not careful, we'll devalue what's been done at the office. Even if it's been a lifetime of doing a desk job in whatever field, that time at the office has been extremely valuable when it's spent serving the Lord and filling a void for good in the world. Sure, it's only one small piece of the puzzle in the world, but who of us is so arrogant to think that our piece of the puzzle is that big in the first place?

By the grace of God, work diligently to display the character of God.

### **By the grace of God, work strategically to advance the mission of God.**

This is where we come back to the good reality in God's design that we're not all pastors. We don't all work for the church, because God is accomplishing a mission in the world and He's doing it by deploying His people as salt and light in all kinds of vocations, so that the gospel and grace of God penetrates every facet of society and culture. We don't necessarily need more pastors and staff members proclaiming the gospel. We need more lawyers, engineers, teachers, accountants, builders and consultants

The point is God has called His people all across this church to do all kinds of jobs for the spread of His goodness, His gospel and His glory all over this city. I love just thinking about it. That's part of what's driving me to dive into this today, because as I read Exodus 31—reading about Bezalel and Oholiab—I pictured faces all across this church doing all kinds of different jobs in all kinds of different places, praying, “God, make Your glory known in all these different domains, in all these different locations, where Your church scatters throughout the week and not just here, but around the world.”

As we've discussed before here, God has given jobs all across this church that open doors for the spread of His glory and His gospel around the world. When you look at countries today that are least reached by the gospel, you can't get into those countries as a pastor or a missionary. But you can get in as an engineer or a teacher or a nurse or a doctor...or a consultant. They're not just jobs that can take you around the world. They're jobs that can be leveraged for the spread of God's Word around the world. I think about Les and Karen Bell in our church, who I know could retire, but they continue to work specifically so they can support national missionaries around the world. They're having a massive impact.

By God's grace, work diligently to display the character of God and strategically to advance the mission of God. Then as you work, rest. Unfortunately, we don't have time to get into an exhaustive discussion today about how the command for the Israelites to observe the Sabbath in the Old Testament applies to believers under the new covenant today. Many Bible-believing Christians and pastors believe it's still binding today; others believe it's not. Even among those who believe it is binding, there's disagreement on what level of activity one should do on the Sabbath and what day that involves. So this is definitely one of those areas where Bible-believing Christians and pastors agree to disagree, even in the same church. But where all Bible-believing Christians and pastors do agree is that we celebrate blood-bought rest at the start of every week, meaning we gather together at the beginning of the week on Sundays for a reason. This is not random. Since the beginning of the church, Acts 20:7 says on the first day of the week the church is gathered together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Yes, we celebrate on Easter in particular, but the reality is we celebrate His resurrection every single week.

Every Sunday we gather for worship to celebrate His death for our sins and His resurrection from the dead, to study His Word together and to focus as a community of believers on our covenant relationship with Him. It's why we celebrate a covenant meal—the Lord's Supper—as part of our worship. Every week we gather to celebrate the reality that Jesus has died for our sins, He's risen from the grave and He has given us rest and life in a relationship with God that affects everything in our lives now and will last forever. We put aside work for this purpose, and for that reason I exhort you to prioritize this celebration at the start of every week, every Sunday, to remind yourself and to teach your kids to show the world that worship is worth setting aside other things in our lives—school, sports, recreation, work, whatever—for this purpose.

What are we saying to God, to our family, to the world around us, and to our own hearts when we neglect the celebration of Christ and the rest we have in a relationship with God at the start of every week, if we just say, "Every once in a while that's important to me"?

### **By the Grace of God, prioritize God-glorifying rest over the course of every week.**

Even if we're not commanded to observe a Sabbath in the same way we see in the Old Testament, surely the fact that at creation God rested on the seventh day, surely the fact that meaning and worth and identity are not found in work, means we should prioritize setting aside work for rest. Practically, for what it's worth, the way I try to prioritize this personally is by setting aside blocks of time during my week when I put work completely aside.

Just say it's Monday night. I've been in the office all day, so my aim that evening is to not do anything workwise, but to rest with Heather and my kids, to focus on them, to not always be checking my phone or email—not to do anything work related. So I have a goal of doing that in a certain number

of blocks throughout the week. Plus at some point during each week I try to have a 24-hour block when I don't do anything related to work to fulfill this Sabbath principle that we see in Scripture.

I don't know exactly what this needs to look like in your life, but I would encourage you, even this week, to spend time before God and the people who are closest to you—your family and the church—and think together through how you can best prioritize rest over the course of your week. Keep God's Word in Psalm 127:2 in mind: *"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."* God gives us sleep and rest as gifts, from physical labor to trust in His love. There's always more work we can do, but God has created us to rest, to turn off, and trust Him as we do.

This week in particular, one of the things I've prayed for you is that God would help you rest from anxiety and worry that comes with always thinking about this or that at work, as well as the circumstances you're walking through in your life or in your family. God has not created you to worry; God has created you to trust. God has not created you for anxiety; He's created you for peace. Peace and trust come in rest, in putting work aside and trusting Him. Rest is a reminder you and I need that we are not in control. He is in control and it glorifies God to rest in His good and sovereign control over all things.

**By the grace of God, look forward to the day when everyone and everything will work perfectly, when we will rest fully and forever in God's great love.**

We saw from the beginning of the Bible that work was a part of perfect creation and when you look at the end of the Bible, you'll see that work is a part of the new heaven and the new earth. We will serve and enjoy God. The Bible does not teach that in heaven we're going to sit around on clouds in boring, endless daydreaming.

The Bible teaches that we will work but imagine it: we will work with complete delight and joy and meaning. No frustration, no futility, nothing to complain or grumble about or dread. We will work in perfect harmony with God and with each other. I don't know what this will look like, but I do know it will be good. So don't long for heaven just as a place of rest. Yes, it's a place of rest from sin and suffering, for those things will be no more. And yes, it's a place of rest and relaxation, for leisure will certainly be there also. But it will not be a place of rest from work because God has designed our very makeup as men and women to work in a way that reflects His work, by His grace, for our good and for His glory. You were created to work and rest for the glory of God.

Let's pray.

O God, we praise You for Your Word. It's so good. We praise You for the instruction You give us for our lives and that we need to hear. God, we are so confused in our culture about work and rest and that plays out in so many different ways. So help us. We pray all these things we've seen in Your Word for our church and every single person in the sound of my voice right now.

God, I pray for those who have not trusted in Jesus as Savior and Lord. May they find rest for their souls today in Jesus. And for all who have, we pray that You'd help us live in that rest as the overflow of rest in You, with our identity, our meaning, our joy and our satisfaction found in You, Jesus. Help us work for Your glory. Help us serve and honor You through where we work and how we work. God, we pray that You would help us rest in a way that trusts You and Your love for us, in a way that is good for us, good for our families, good for those around us and ultimately glorifying to You. Help us, we pray, to work and rest for Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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