



## Faith & Work 1 - Work as God's Good Design

We are doing a new 4-week series on Faith & Work, and we're discussing sermons 1, 3 and 4 in our CG's (after the 2nd one we have our prayer meeting).

The first sermon looks at Genesis 1-3 to see the Dignity, Design and Discomfort of work. The notes will mainly be from the perspective of paid employment, though as was explained on Sunday, work is the main thing we give our time and energy to. So it includes things like a charity volunteer, stay-at-home parent, taking care of elderly parents etc. But most people in our CG's are young adults with jobs hence the focus.

### Questions

1. Share how you find your work, particularly as a Christian. Do you feel you are serving God with your work/study/endeavour? Why/why not?

*General icebreaker and getting people sharing at the start of this series*

2. What does our work have to do with God, in its dignity and design, according to Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:8, 15? What aspect of this is most striking to you?

*There's a few ways our work relates to God, according to those verses.*

- *Work is part of being in God's image, reflecting him (1:26-28) - God is a worker (2:2), and so are we.*
- *We don't just resemble God, our job is to have dominion = steward the world in God's place, as his representatives (1:28).*
- *God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it (2:15). This is priestly language, what the priests do, with the garden a kind of temple (just like the temple looked like a garden on the inside). So we are working for God, serving him, through our work.*

*So we reflect God, represent God, and serve God as we work - all of them amazing privileges, giving work incredible dignity. Just picture yourself sitting at your desk and say these things about yourself - not how we usually think!*



3. How do you practically serve God with your particular job (not in your job)? I.e. how does your work contribute to society? Help each other see your job's value.

*With and in is an important distinction. We often would say we serve God in our job because we are a good witness, try to tell the gospel, love our colleagues etc. But we should see we also serve God with our job. We do good to others and help make society better through our work.*

*A helpful question could be: "What would happen to Hong Kong if everyone with my profession suddenly disappeared?". This may help to show how important your job is to society.*

4. Not all jobs are equal. Apart from quality of work, what makes work good/less good? What might be less good aspects of your current job, if any?

*Work should serve society and honour God. Of course there are clearly immoral jobs like dealing drugs or prostitution. But also other jobs may not be clearly immoral but still not be good. E.g. work that ruins the environment, exploits people, feeds their addictions, harms their health, promotes division and injustice etc.*

*This is not always easy to know - it requires some thought, especially with more complex jobs. But perhaps good to do and think more seriously about our jobs.*

5. How do you experience the sin and brokenness of this world at work? What do you struggle with most at the moment in this area?

*Of course we live in a broken world. The world and our work is not as it should be. Hence frustration, sin, conflict etc, which is often a big struggle for many of us.*

6. As Christians we have Christ and through him everything. In what ways does this help us work in this fallen world? How does it help with what we just shared?

*Through Christ we have everything we need. Kevin mentioned a few*

- We have a new master - if we have a sinful or incompetent boss.



- *We have new power against our sin.*
- *We have a new worldview - we know the truth and the right way to live*
- *We have a new rest - because we are already accepted in Christ*

*You can probably think of more - new hope, new security, new motivation, new reward and so on. Wonderful good news for us.*

7. (If time) what questions do you have about faith & work? Try to answer them together.

*In case you need to fill time. Good to get any questions people have on the table. Maybe some you can discuss then, others you can keep in mind for other weeks. Or send them in :-)*

### **Ideas for prayer**

- Give thanks for the awesome privilege of reflecting and representing God through our work. Pray we would work wholeheartedly for him
- Give thanks for all those in society who work and we benefit from. Pray we would be appreciative and gladly play our part in serving society.
- Pray we would be thoughtful about our jobs and seek to do good work - that we would be aware of sinful and destructive aspects and seek to bring change.
- Pray we would see who we are and what we have in Christ when we're struggling and to let the gospel transform the way we work.



## Faith & Work 3 - Work as Crucible

We are doing a new 4-week series on Faith & Work, and we're discussing sermons 1, 3 and 4 in our CG's.

Sermon 3 on Genesis 3 follows well after sermon 1 on Genesis 1-2. It is about how work is cursed and difficult, but God redeems it by using it for our growth in holiness.

### Questions

1. In what different ways has the Fall and Curse in Genesis 3:1-19 affected work? Give examples of each.

*Adam & Eve's sin and God's subsequent judgement is the shadow that we are all working in. There are three broken relationships*

- **Us & creation** - work is frustrating and difficult
- **Us & other people** - conflict and sin at work
- **Us & God** - idolatry as we seek satisfaction, approval & security in our work

*We will all have plenty of examples.*

2. What is your natural response when work is hard? Have you ever considered leaving? How does Gen. 3 both affirm and challenge us when we want to leave?

*Difficulties at work lead to despair, frustration, bitterness, and often a desire to leave and go elsewhere. Group members may have done so in the past.*

*This passage in a way affirms this feeling. We were made for a good world with good work but due to our sin work is not as it should be. These difficulties should make us want to escape and drive us to God and long for work without a curse. Of course, the challenge is that we often think we're in the wrong job, and God must be telling us we should look for a new job. Actually, Genesis 3 tells us we're not in the wrong job. God is telling us we're in the wrong universe. Work is cursed, and getting a new job won't change that. You are still sinful, your new colleagues will be sinful, and your new job is in the same broken world... So bottom line, don't think that you need to leave when work is hard.*



*Of course, as we heard the week before in the sermon on Proverbs, there is a nuanced discussion to be had. No job is perfect but some really are better than others, and there is a place for changing jobs when things are really difficult or it's hard to be a Christian. Or if a job is boring and you can get a more interesting one, with no impact on the rest of your life, why not? This requires prayer, discussion with others and searching one's heart. Based on 1 Cor. 7:21-22 if you're stuck, be content in Christ, and if you're free to change, decide under Christ.*

3. Which Bible passages do people know about God using difficulties to shape us? Read them. How do God's priorities challenge ours? How do you feel about this?

*There are lots. Romans 5:3-5, 8:28-30, Hebrews 12:5-11, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7 are famous NT passages, or in the OT there is the famous Psalm 119:67. If no one knows, go for James I think. In all of them God is more interested in our character than in our comfort. He is producing character and hope (Romans), holiness (Hebrews), making us perfect and complete (James), purifying our faith (1 Peter) etc. This sounds great except that it is a painful process. Most of us would rather be mediocre yet comfortable than suffering yet holy. Challenges us about what we want from life.*

4. How do we let God shape us through our work? If needed look at James 1:2-4, 12, 5:10-11, Rom 5:3-4. What will this look like in practice?

*The note is steadfastness/endurance (same word in Greek). It's as we endure difficulties, not giving in to complaining, bitterness or sinful shortcuts, but rather holding on with faith and hope, continuing to do good while trusting God, that God works his miracle in us. This will look like staying in a job, but also e.g. continuing to love a difficult colleague or manager, not gossiping or complaining about what is going on, crying out in prayer etc.*

*In September/October we'll be doing James - should be great to think this through.*

5. Any examples of how you have grown through difficulties at work in the past? What might God be doing in you at the moment through your work situation?

*Just some reflection - there is no right answer! But good for people to see how they may have grown through a difficult time at work, or are growing at the moment.*



*Maybe learning patience, or learning to stand firm, or priorities set straight... Hopefully seeing how God has been at work through our experience makes it more valuable.*

6. What can we do as a gospel community to help each other persevere through these trials? With what gospel truths can we encourage one another?

*Given this is a big thing for many of us, making sure this is part of life for us as a community. Praying, supporting, reminding each other of God's love and our status as children of God, so that we know these difficulties are for our good (Heb 12), and of the Spirit's power and the reward for those who persevere etc.*

7. The curse is represented by thorns in our work (Gen 3:18). How is this connected to the gospel events? How does this encourage you as you persevere?

*Hopefully people see the connection: Jesus' crown of thorns. It symbolizes that he was taking the curse on himself as he went to the cross, including the curse on our work. And why? To remove it from us, so one day we can work in a new creation where there is no longer anything accursed (Rev. 22:3).*

*It is good to know that the curse will one day be over, that there is someone who knows our suffering and cares about it, someone who loves us enough to come and take it from us, and is strong enough to remove it forever. It should give us hope and patience amidst the trials of work.*

### **Ideas for prayer**

- Pray we would be clear on the condition of this world and our work. Rather than complain or seek an escape, pray we would see our sinfulness and so humbly look to God. Pray for wise decisions under Christ if we seek to change jobs.
- Give thanks that God is at work in our trials to make us like Christ. Pray we would see the beauty of holiness and patiently submit to his refining work.
- Our colleagues are likewise suffering the curse. Pray God would use us to bring hope to those around us and be a light in the darkness of work difficulties.



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- Give thanks that Christ took on the Curse for us, and that we will work forever for him in a perfect new world. Pray we would wait for it with patience (Rom 8:25)



## **Faith & Work 4 - Christians at Work ( Col. 3:23-24)**

The last sermon of our sermon series was by Henry Craig. The focus was on being Christians at work, rather than perhaps the bigger picture or the content of our work

### **Questions**

1. What struck you most from the sermon? What was the greatest encouragement or challenge?

*General sharing - there was a lot in the sermon to think about, very practical and very challenging.*

2. Read Colossians 3:23-24. What is the major truth here, and how should it shape our identity at work?

*The big truth here is that we are serving Jesus. We ultimately don't work for our earthly boss but for Jesus. Why? He is the one who will give us the inheritance. In corporate terms, he does our ultimate performance review and gives us our bonus, which means he is our true master. (Encouraging when your manager here is awful)*

*Practically, it means that our primary identity is always that of a Christian. You're not an accountant who does some Christian stuff, but you're a Christian disguised as an accountant. You work as if you work for Jesus because you really do.*

3. Do your colleagues know that you're a Christian? Have people ever remarked about your faith or behaviour? How was that?

*Sharing that leads into the next question about how we should be different as ambassadors. Do people know we're Christians? They should, as God wants us to be on display. Or maybe people remarked how we don't curse, or we remained calm under stress, or were kind to a co-worker etc, which became an opportunity to talk about the gospel.*

4. What are some ways we should be distinctive at work as Christians, as ambassadors for Christ?





*The sermon mentioned a number of areas. Our diligence. Our speech. Our attitude to gossip. Joining in with complaining or immoral behaviour. Et cetera... Some areas may have come up in the previous question.*

5. What do you think is your primary “mission” at work? What can be consequences of overemphasizing or underemphasizing evangelism as part of our mission?

*Our mission is to serve Christ as ambassadors. And the main way we do this is actually by doing good work, by doing our job to the best of our ability (work heartily, in Col. 3:23). And in general, by representing Christ in our interactions at work, in love and godly witness.*

*One interesting area is evangelism. Sometimes this is emphasised so much to the extent that it seems to be the only thing that matters. Consequences are that 1) we feel our normal work doesn't matter at all and 2) we neglect our work and appropriate boundaries to do more evangelism (e.g. Henry's example of meeting up with interested colleagues outside work rather than during work time). On the other hand, work is where we spend 50-70 hours a week with non-Christians. We do serve God through our work, yet Jesus gave us a commission to make disciples. If we're not praying for opportunities and making ourselves known as a Christian we have missed what Jesus is doing in the world.*

*Ultimately the two are not unrelated. Matthew 5:16 and 1 Peter 2:11-12 show our distinctive living bears witness. If we do a good job and live Christ's way, people will be asking us questions and we will have opportunities to speak the gospel.*

6. Have you recently experienced conflict at work? How was it different from e.g. at church? How would you have done things differently in light of the gospel?

*Most of us have studied conflict a few weeks ago in the Gospel Centred Life, so won't repeat too much. The big distinction was **attacking** (being right, winning) and **withdrawing** (keeping the peace, ignoring conflict) and the gospel way of addressing rightly. Good to reflect partly about workplace dynamics - some of us are naturally attackers but become withdrawers once our job depends on it - and how we would have done things differently if we knew then what we know now about the gospel.*



7. Reflect on the whole series. What has struck you the most? What would you like prayer for?

*Wrapping up the series and transitioning to prayer*

### **Ideas for prayer**

- Give thanks that we work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that we would find our identity securely in him and not in our work.
- Pray we would live as ambassadors of Christ in our workplaces, showing through our life that we belong to Jesus, and not be conformed to the world.
- Pray that as we do good work and love those around us we would have many opportunities to share the gospel in appropriate ways.
- Pray that we will deal with conflict in a gospel-centred way, trusting that God's way of repentance and humility will lead to the best results.