

Overview of Christian Vocation

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[0:00] and there are some copies of it over on the bookstall. I think there were three copies last I saw. If we run out of them, we'll buy more of them. They're \$12. You can put money in one of the envelopes, put the envelope in the offering basket.

That's how the bookstall works. If you really, really want the book and would definitely be committed to reading it, and you're in a situation where you literally don't have \$12, you don't have any money, then just talk to me and we can get you a book if that's your situation.

Let's jump in. Turn in a Bible. If you have a Bible, turn to Genesis. We're going to start right at the beginning. Maybe if somebody could go over and get a few Bibles from the bottom of the bookstall.

Maybe if somebody in the kitchen can turn that volume down. Great. Great. All right.

So, what the Bible says about work. The first thing we learn is that God creates work. That's the first part of Every Good Endeavor talks about this theme. So, I want to look a little bit at Genesis 1 and 2.

[1:17] Genesis 1, 1 to 5. Let me read these verses. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void. That means it was formless and empty.

And darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good.

And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day. And the darkness he called night. And there was evening. And there was morning the first day. Now, I won't read the whole Genesis 1 creation account.

But the first thing we see in the Bible about work is we see God working. That's the first verse of the Bible. God creating the heavens and the earth. God creating the earth.

God creating the earth. Going from verse 2. Darkness, formlessness, emptiness. And in chapter 1, going to light and structure and fullness.

[2:14] So, first day, let there be light. The first three days, we see God sort of structuring or ordering the universe. There's different sort of setting out different realms. The day and the night.

The heaven and or the sky and the land. The waters and the land. And then the, let's see.

That's second day. Right. The waters and the land is day 3. And then day 4 through 6, we see God filling each of these realms. So, we see God filling the sky with lights to sort of govern the sky.

Then day 5, we see God filling the waters and the land with birds. Or filling the waters with birds and fish. And then day 6, we see God filling the land with animals.

And ultimately with people. So, if you look, you know, think about how does Genesis 1 present God? Well, it presents God sort of like an architect or a builder or an artist who is creating out of nothing.

- [3 : 24] Who is shaping, forming, filling, making something orderly and beautiful. And through his creative word.
- If you look at Genesis 2. Turn the page to Genesis 2, verses 7 and 8. This sort of, Genesis 2 sort of is almost like focusing in on a smaller part of what Genesis 1 speaks about.
- Genesis 2, 7 says, Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east.
- And there he put the man whom he had formed. So, Genesis 2, the picture of God that we see in Genesis 2, it's almost like God is like a gardener. He's planting a garden.
- He's forming the man out of the ground. So, there's imagery of God almost being like a manual laborer or an agricultural worker. So, even just in these first two chapters of the Bible, we see God depicted as working in these various different ways.
- [4 : 37] When you say God, is it God the Son? It's God the, well, I think the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are working together in creation.
- So, the whole trinity is never completely divided. So, I think God the Father is sort of decreeing and God the Son is carrying it out in his word.
- And the Spirit is involved as well. But, we won't try to parse that out right now. Genesis 2, 2. Jump back up to Genesis 2, 2. We also see that God rests.
- 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. What does that mean? Well, it's sort of, again, this image of God sitting back, looking at the work that he's completed, and taking joy in it.
- I mean, have you ever finished a project? Some of you have jobs where it feels like there is no project that is ever finished. But, have you ever finished a project? That's the nice thing about working in construction or something concrete.
- [5 : 41] You can actually get to the end of a project. Of course, then the roof starts to leak. And then you have to fix things. And so, again, our work on earth is never quite done. But, have you ever got to the end of something?
- You know, you turn in your final term paper, or whatever it is, and you look back, and you take some joy, right? There's some enjoyment in a finished work.
- And the Bible is saying that's actually a very tiny reflection of sort of what God felt as he looked over his creation.
- I get that satisfaction cutting my lawn. Yes. Yep. You see the lawn nice and neat. Yeah. It goes from being a hayfield to being orderly rows of, you know.
- Yeah. Yes. Right. Even very, even, right, little things. So, God finished the work that he had done. He rests in his sovereignty and his joy. So, that's the first thing we see, God as a worker.
- [6 : 38] Second thing we see is that human beings are created in God's image. And part of bearing God's image is we are created and commanded to work. So, Genesis 1.27, God created man.
- God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them. God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.
- So, right, God brings life to the world and brings life to human beings. And then God says, carry on this life-giving process. Be fruitful and multiply.

And then we've seen God sort of structures and orders the world and fills it with wonderful things. And God says to human beings, rule over this.

Sort of cultivate this. Fill the earth and subdue it. Sort of exercising. God is the king over all.

[7:41] And we're sort of delegated some of his authority to rule over his creation. Chapter 2, verse 15. It says, the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

So, here's a very explicit statement. Work is not just part of God's curse on a fallen world. Work is something that we were created and commanded to do from the beginning.

We also see that work is intended to be a team effort. God tells Adam, work and keep the garden. And then verse 18 says, God says, it's not good the man should be alone.

I will make him a helper fit for him. That word helper can mean an ally. Right, God says, be fruitful and multiply. That is impossible to do with one person. Adam and Eve need one another in order to begin fulfilling that command.

And I think more broadly speaking, you know, human work is intended to be something. It's not just intended to be a solitary endeavor that we do completely on our own.

[8:44] There's a way that God has created us to work as a team. Throughout the Bible, if you look just throughout the Old Testament, I've listed a few different people, different kinds of doing very different kinds of work.

So, end of Genesis, Joseph, he becomes a gifted administrator who saves Egypt from starving in a famine. He went from being in a dungeon to being in the palace, but he used his authority in the palace to gather up the grain and sort of organize this program to mitigate the effects of the famine.

Exodus, we see Bezalel and Aholiab, creative artists who fashioned materials for the tabernacle, according to God's commission. We see the book of Ruth. Ruth diligently goes out to the field and gleans in order to feed her elderly mother-in-law.

So, we see Ruth being diligent to care for a vulnerable relative. We see Ezra, teacher of God's word and priest of God's people. Nehemiah, an urban planner or developer who rebuilds Jerusalem.

Esther, a high official in an ungodly empire who yet works for justice and protecting God's vulnerable people. These are just a very few examples. But think about how broad a variety of work you see in just these six characters.

[10:10] And you could find many, many, many other characters in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament who do all kinds of different things. But these are just some of the characters who we have more extensive stories about.

One note, work in the Bible is a broader category than paid employment. When we talk about work, we tend to equate that with paid employment. So, some people might say to parents, especially to mothers, do you work?

No, I stay home. Well, goodness. It can be a lot of work to stay home and raise children. Do you work in the home or do you work out of the home? Or both, right?

Like, that's maybe a better question. But there's lots of kinds of work. Another example of work would be, again, as Ruth did, caring for elderly or disabled relatives. That's something that's often not paid.

Sometimes it might be paid, but usually within a family you're probably not getting paid. But, yeah, that's a very important work. You might spend a significant portion of your life doing that. Any kind of volunteer service.

[11:20] And there's all kinds of things. Mentoring, tutoring. There's all kinds of things are significant work that aren't necessarily paid. In general, depending on the society that you live in, there might be important tasks that the society does not value economically.

In some societies, that might be care of orphans. You know, if you want to start an orphanage in some places in the world, you might have to find the money somewhere else.

Because there might not be anybody who would pay you for that. And the children clearly can't pay you to take care of them. Right? So there's all kinds of important work in the world that are not paid.

So I want to acknowledge that. And anyway, so in this class, a lot of people might be focusing on their jobs.

Not everyone. But I just want to acknowledge that work can be much broader than that. And we should think of our sort of God's calling for us to work as broader than that. Sometimes the most important work you might be doing at a certain point in your life might have nothing to do with your job.

[12:33] We shouldn't always think that our job is sort of the most important component of that. Always and everywhere. What else? Human beings are also invited to enter into God's rest and delight.

There's an interesting contrast. So there's an old Babylonian epic poem called Enuma Elish. And it basically, one of the parts of it is, it's the story of how these pagan Babylonian gods were fighting and conniving with each other.

And how the world came out as a result of a fight between different gods. And in that epic, the god Marduk says, I will bring into being a lowly primitive creature.

Man shall be his name. He shall be charged with service of the gods that they might be at ease. So the Babylonian view is that the gods get tired of working. And so they make people to be their slaves so that the gods can rest and have leisure.

Now, isn't that interesting to compare to the Bible? Right? We see God, first of all, we see God is a worker and God rests. And God actually invites, as his image bearers, we're invited to enter into both of those things.

[13:42] God invites us to share in some of his work, to participate in some of his work, and also to enjoy his rest. Isn't that a much better story to live in?

Right? Isn't that a much better God to serve? You know, praise God that we have a God who cares about us and who doesn't just use us.

So, alright, any questions about God created and commanded us to work? Or comments so far? Alright, we'll go on.

Second point. God frustrates work. I've deliberately phrased that a little bit provocatively. So, sadly, the fact that God created and commanded us to work is not the whole story.

We live on the other side of the fall. There's no part of God's creation that is unaffected by sin. So, what we see in the Bible is that after the fall, work becomes toilsome and frustrating and often futile.

[14:44] Paul talks about this in Romans. He says, The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it. And most people think that the him in that verse refers to God.

Some people think it refers to Adam, but it's a little odd to think of Adam subjecting creation to futility. I think it's obviously a result of Adam's sin, Adam and Eve's sin. But it seems like it's saying God subjected creation to futility.

Sort of God frustrated human work after the fall. Now, there's an end of that verse that talks about the hope of restoration and freedom. We'll get to that later. That word futility in Romans 8.20 is the one New Testament reference to the book of Ecclesiastes.

But it's the word that appears over and over in Ecclesiastes that is translated in different translations as vanity or meaninglessness or emptiness or a mere breath. And Ecclesiastes basically says everything is empty, a breath, vanity, ephemeral, quickly passing away.

The Hebrew word is hebel. And Paul and Ecclesiastes are really both commenting back on the story of the fall in Genesis 3. So in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve, they don't follow God's commands.

[16:02] They don't work and keep the garden. Right? An intruder comes into the garden. And instead of kicking him out like they were supposed to do, they decide that he has a better idea than God.

And so they follow the serpent and are deceived and everything falls apart. So the relevant part of this to work comes in chapter 3, verses 16 to 19, where God speaks to Eve and Adam about the consequences of their sin.

So Genesis 3.16, to the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.

And to Adam he said, because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

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 are taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

[17:11] So again, the same work that God had originally commissioned people to carry out, right? Being fruitful and multiplying and filling the earth. Well, there's going to be pain.

Beginning with the bearing of children. And we might add, continuing in the process of raising them, right? There is pain that comes along with that. There's also, right, work's meant to be a team effort, but here we see there's going to be power struggles.

Your desire will be for your husband, he shall rule over you. That's a picture of a power struggle. It's not a picture of how marriage was meant to work. It's not the picture of marriage that Paul gives in Ephesians 5.

But it's a picture of what marriage looks like in a fallen world. With sinful people who want their own way, and are trying to get their own way at the expense of the other. We see God's words to Adam, right?

Cultivate the ground, work and keep the garden. Guess what? There's going to be, you're going to get thorns and thistles. You're going to get poison ivy. I have poison ivy. I have been, it's nasty, right?

[18:24] That's a particular manifestation of thorns and thistles that is very real to me this week. Right? Sweat and pain, right? That's what work looks like. That's what clearing your yard looks like.

Anyway, going on, we see this happening further in Genesis. Genesis 11 is another example of God frustrating people's work.

And in particular, it's God frustrating people's idolatrous ambitions. Right? The Tower of Babel, they say we want to build a tower that reaches the heaven. Where do you get the idea you can do that?

You know, we want to be greater than everybody else in the world. We want to have our place of security in this tower, this temple tower. And God says, uh-uh-uh.

Uh-uh-uh. Not going to let that happen. Practical question, right? Have you ever been frustrated in your work? It hasn't. Oh, yeah.

[19:24] Okay? Have you ever thought that part of that? Now, there's all kind of frustration that's due to the sinful actions of human beings, but do you realize that God has a providential purpose behind it?

God frustrates human work so that we don't idolize it, and so we don't look to it to save us. And so instead, we look to him for our salvation and our hope. That's why God frustrates work.

It's to show us that in a fallen world, we cannot fix things by ourselves. That we still rely on him as our creator and sustainer, and that he is the redeemer.

Not you and me. Throughout the Bible, I think we see there's sort of two main dangers we fall into in our attitudes toward work after the fall.

One would be idolatry, and one would be idleness. And the Old and New Testament both warn against these things. We see this balance in the Old Testament Sabbath commands.

[20:24] Six days you shall work. Don't be idle. Don't sit around doing nothing. All week. Get up and do something. Even if you don't have a job, get up and do something useful. Right?

For the people you live with, for your neighbors, for somebody else in the world. Right? Six days you shall work. And then on the seventh day you shall rest.

And there were very strict commands about rest on the seventh day in the Old Testament. And the whole thing was remember that God created you and God redeemed you.

Don't worship your work. That's the point of the Sabbath. One of the points of the Sabbath. We see in the New Testament describing this balance in a similar way in Ephesians 2, 8 through 10.

What does it say? It says salvation is not a result of works. Right? Don't think that your work of whatever kind can save you. Don't think that it can make your life and sort of prove your worth in this world.

[21:30] Because whatever you do, no matter how wonderful it is, it will never bear that weight. You'll never be able to do that. But then in chapter 2, verse 10, Paul says, remember you're created in Christ Jesus for good works.

You know, God hasn't made you a new creation in Christ so you can just sit back and watch TV all day. Right? God's made you a new creation in Christ so you can do something valuable and meaningful in this world.

That glorifies him. Any questions? Comments before we move on to part 3? Alright, part 3.

God redeems work. We're doing Colossians this fall. And there's a wonderful verse in Colossians 1, 19 and 20 where Paul says, In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

In other words, Christ's purpose is to bring everything in creation into order once again. Right?

[22:44] He's going to put back what the fall sort of broke and shattered apart and bring things back into God's good and life-giving ways. We also see that second part of the Romans verse, Creation was subjected to futility, but that's not the last word in hope that one day the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

So that's where we're headed. As believers in Christ, that's what we have to look forward to, is God is redeeming work. 1 Corinthians 15, 58, Paul speaks to believers saying, Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

And this is at the end of the chapter about the resurrection of Jesus. Because Jesus has risen from the dead, be steadfast, be immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord. Now, what is the work of the Lord? Paul's probably primarily focusing on sort of work that furthers the gospel.

But again, you know, Colossians 3, 17 says, Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. So can we do our daily work as living out 1 Corinthians 15, 58?

I think we can if we're doing it to the glory of God. Paul was a tent maker. Yeah, that's right. That's right. He was, right, he often made tents so that he could do the more important work for him, which was preaching the gospel and planting churches, which at some points, you know, there was no way he could be paid for that, right?

[24:23] So again, there's an example where sometimes you might take a job because you really want to have the freedom to do something else. And Luke was a physician. Now, there's value in making tents. I don't want to deprecate that, right?

It was really valuable, wasn't it? I mean, there's value in making tent, you know, so that, you know, if you're camping out or if that's what you live in, that rain doesn't, you know, rain doesn't get you wet at night and you don't get sick because you're wet and cold all night, right?

So there's a value in that. But I think for Paul, he would have said tent making is a means to an end because if he had the opportunity to do the other thing full time, he did it. Anyway, let me skip down to how do we approach our work as ambassadors of Christ and of his new creation.

So in this book, Tim Keller outlines four distinct but overlapping ways the gospel can and should affect our approach to work. So four things that I want to sort of throw out for us to think about and hopefully come back to in future weeks.

So first, what does it mean to work according to God's redemptive purposes? One, Tim Keller says, developing a Christian worldview leads us to work distinctively, seeking to shape culture in ways that honor God and reflect his creative and redemptive designs.

[25:50] And he points out that sort of an emphasis in the Reformed or Calvinist tradition of theology. As Abraham Kuyper, that quote is a sort of expression of that. So that's one important thing is work distinctively.

Second, work humbly. He says, we should also understand the idea of God's providence and common grace. In other words, God provides for the whole union.

God has woken us up this morning. Everyone who's alive this morning, God has given life to them. Whether they recognize him or not, whether they worship God or not, God is the one who is sustaining the world.

And God is also the one who is sustaining the world. You know, many times through the work of people who don't recognize him as the source of that. And so the idea of this is that we should work humbly because we realize that God is just using us as instruments.

Just like he's using everybody else in the world. And so it also means we can value the work of people who are not believers. Because it's God who's enabling them to do that, even if they don't recognize that God is.

[26:53] Common grace of it. Right? Even if they don't recognize that God is behind all the wisdom that they have and all the skills that they have, he is. And so we can work humbly.

You know, Martin Luther talks about that. He says, God could easily give you grain and fruit without your plowing and planting, but he doesn't want to do so.

He sort of uses this analogy of parents assigning chores to their children. We assign chores to our children in our house. Well, yeah, we're in transit.

We're trying to figure out what the best way to do that is now. But anyway, we do assign chores to our children. And because we want, now it's not because, some of it is because there's a lot of work to do in managing a household.

And it's helpful if they do that for us because we just have limited time and resources. But some of it is honestly things that, you know, when my children help me make pancakes on Sunday morning, I can make them faster if they don't help.

[27 : 54] But you know what? They love to help. And I want to teach them to cook. And they enjoy making pancakes. This is our Sunday morning tradition before we come to church. We always make pancakes. And so I involve them in that, usually, unless we're running really late.

Or unless they're, like, totally fighting with each other, which sometimes happens. But, right, why do I involve them? It's so that they can come to share in something that I enjoy and I know how to do.

And I want them to grow up to enjoy and know how to do. Right? And Luther says that's basically what it's, you know, it's a little picture of what it's like with God and everything that we do. God could accomplish everything that he has us work on in this world by himself without our help.

But he chooses not to do it that way. He chooses to involve us because he wants us to grow up and come to share in the things that he loves and come to enjoy the things that he enjoys and come to sort of be a worker like him.

Right? To reflect his image. So that's sort of Luther's idea in that quote. All right. Second, third, our overarching loyalty to Christ as Lord lead us to work honestly, upholding high moral and ethical standards.

[29 : 05] And there are other Christian traditions that have sort of emphasized Christians need to work in a moral and ethical way and sort of draw lines where we need to draw lines and sort of live according to, in a way that reflects God's holiness.

Fourth, resting in Christ's finished work on our behalf leads us to work and rest freely. Not compulsively, not trying to justify ourselves by our work, but we've been liberated from the idolatry of achievement because Christ is our identity and Christ is our hope.

So those are four aspects of what it looks like to work sort of along the lines of God's redemption. Let's talk a little bit about that. I'd love to hear some of your responses to this so far.

Tyler. It seems that, like, we were just talking about, like, every single thing that we do, we do to the glory of God, no matter how mundane the world thinks it is.

You know, you dig a ditch for the glory of God, no matter how mundane the world thinks it is. But it seems that, you know, a lot of us talk about this, like, this notion of calling, what you're calling.

[30 : 16] I don't think this is my calling. And another way to say that is, like, I still enjoy doing this. I think that's kind of what we mean by that. Yeah. But what's your thoughts on, like, the idea of, like, Christians having a calling in terms of our vocation?

Yes. So part of that, I'll get to that in the next section. But along those lines, I read a quote this week. I was reading another book. And it was posted in the kitchen in a sort of intentional Christian community house.

And it says, everyone wants to change the world. Nobody wants to do the dishes. Yeah. And, right, it was a group of people who had sort of high ideals and, you know, move into a neighborhood and be the, you know, be the presence of Christ here and see the gospel go forward and work for justice and all these things.

And it's a reminder, like, you've got to do the mundane things if you want to, if you care about those high ideals. Well, you actually have to do the things that work that out. Yeah. And that gets back to sort of, you know, Luther talking about, you know, all, there's not a hierarchy of, you know, scorecard of what work is more important, like you were talking about digging ditches.

Michael Horton has a great book called Ordinary, which gets to the washing the dishes, you know, too, that everyone's searching for. Like, I think that's your question. You know, as Christians, do we all have to do Christian work?

[31 : 40] And Keller really gets into that later in the book. Tim Keller talked in one of his sermons at Redeemer talked about calling, and he explained it this way. He says, if your wife says you should go to law school, and all your friends tell you you should go to law school, and you have the time to study for law school, and you've got the money to go to law school, and everything around you says go to law school, then it's time to go to law school.

It's not a voice coming from heaven. It's all these things put together. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Others, thoughts?

A couple other thoughts or comments? Linda. Yeah. There's a very wise Bible study leader that once said, and a Bible study that really stuck out to me, and was really freeing to me.

He said, you know, your biggest mission in life is to love God and to love others. And does this job offer allowing you to do that? Does this path in life do that? Or does it cause you to neglect your life, neglect your kids?

You make it so complicated. I make things so complicated. And that was really freeing to me, that I can do that, love God and love others. Yeah. And see my work as a way to do that. Right.

[32 : 55] Right. Hopefully I didn't miss coding. Amen. That's right. That's right. Well, let me jump on, since we're on this topic.

So the rest of this, I've summarized and adapted a slightly longer article from, there's a website called Theology of Work, which has a lot of good resources on there. But this is from an article, sort of an overview article, about this idea of calling.

Is there a calling? Well, the Bible says our primary calling is to belong to Christ. Romans 1, 6, you are called to belong to Jesus Christ. That's what Paul says to the church in Rome. That's what Paul says to every Christian.

And our second calling is to become like Christ. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. Romans 8, 29. So that's our primary calling.

Belong to Christ. Become like Christ. The particular kind of work we're engaged in is a secondary thing. It's not unimportant, but it is secondary. I'd also say how we work is probably even more important to God than what kind of work we do.

[33 : 59] Because again, you can do all kinds of things in a way that loves God and loves your neighbor. Now there might be, there are some jobs that Christians should not do, right? Because by doing them, you are directly contradicting one of God's commands.

So there are some things that Christians need to stay away from and say, well, no, I can't do that because that's sin. That's like directly sinning against one of God's basic commands. But apart from that, how we work is more likely, generally more important.

And the reality is most people in the history of the world have had little or no ability to choose their job, right? And many people today, probably even most people in the world today, don't have a lot of say.

And even people who have a lot of say in what they do often end up in situations where they're like, ah, I'm doing this. And it's not really what I want to do. And I thought it's what I wanted to do. But it's so frustrating.

Or I'm working in the field I want to work in, but I have a terrible boss, right? There's all those kinds of things. All right. So having said all that, just sort of in terms of wisdom, if you're in a position to make choices about what kind of job or profession you pursue, consider three things.

[35 : 06] Because those are the needs of the world. Now that starts with how do I take care of myself and my family if I have a family, okay? So that's an important concern.

You don't want to be sort of going out and doing something and then, you know, defaulting on your mortgage and ending up sort of in a disaster because you weren't being diligent to do what you could, right?

You want to do what you can, sort of start there. But the Bible also talks about sharing with the vulnerable, caring for the poor, being generous. That's one of the needs of the world.

And serving the common good. Jeremiah 29 says, Seek the peace of the city where the Lord has put you. So think about what are needs in the world that you see, right?

Whether they're close to home or further away from home, what is something that I can do that actually meets a genuine need in the world? Second, consider your skills and gifts. The Bible talks about, in the New Testament, it talks about spiritual gifts.

[36 : 08] But in general, God gives people skills and gifts for accomplishing the work he wants them to do. But again, note, in many cases, God sort of waits to give you gifts until you're in a position where you need them.

So, you know, again, you don't want to say, well, I'm just not skilled and gifted to do that. You have to discern that, right? Some of the times the way you learn, am I skilled and gifted to do something is, I see this as a need.

I'm going to try to help. And maybe I'll realize that this is a good fit for me. And maybe I'll realize it's not a good fit for me. And then I'll just go another way. But at least I've tried, right?

Third, your truest desires. These are important. Psalm 37, take delight in the Lord. He'll give you the desires of your heart. Frederick Buechner has this quote, the place God calls you is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

But again, sort of like your skills and gifts, getting in touch with our truest desires is not always as easy as it seems. Our motive, because again, our motivations can get very confused by sin and the brokenness of the world.

[37 : 17] So the work that would fulfill your true desire might seem very undesirable on the surface of it. And it might require great sacrifice at many points. And so I think it's really as we grow closer, excuse me, as we grow closer to Christ, he enables us to get to know ourselves better in these ways.

He enables us to get to sort of know our skills and gifts better, and really be in touch with our truest desires. But I think we also need to be humble and say, you know what, I might actually not be totally in touch with these things.

Or I might see them at least, obviously I don't see them as clearly as God sees them. So again, these are sort of things to consider, but to sort of hold in wisdom.

And the other thing, the other point that I would make is, is when you're making a discernment decision, you know, Raul's example about law school is a good one. What do people around you who know you, and who are wise and mature, and who love the Lord, like what are they saying?

You know, or even people who may not believe in God, but maybe they're, you know, your parents or something, so they might know you well. In some ways, you know, they might have some wisdom and insight as well.

[38 : 36] So, yes, God, even in the Bible, it's very rare that God specifically, sort of directly, unmistakably, tells somebody, this is the work you need to do.

That happens occasionally. It's quite rare in the Bible. Like to Moses. So we shouldn't, right, to Moses, right, burning bush, right. So we shouldn't expect or insist that God direct us in that way.

We're created and commanded to work. Rather, we should pray that God refines our priorities, give us the courage to make a wise decision while trusting his care for us. Yeah, engage in discussions about God's leading with those in the Christian community who know you well.

And remember, you have freedom to make mistakes and take risks and even to fail. Right? Sometimes we can get so perfectionist and so anxious about wanting to find the best thing that we get paralyzed and do nothing.

Or we do something and then we're just like constantly worried about it. That it might be the wrong thing. And you know what? Some of us just need to remind ourselves it's okay. Like, chill out. Exactly. You know, God, it's, what's the worst thing that happens?

[39 : 46] Well, you make a mistake and you learn from it. And that's alright. Because you know what? When you stand before God at the final judgment, whether or not you get into heaven does not depend on whether you fulfilled your God-given potential in life.

It doesn't depend on if you chose the right job. Right? Your salvation depends on Christ and your primary calling again is to belong to Christ and become more like Christ and so you can be becoming like Christ.

Maybe it's just becoming more humble through the process of trying something out and failing and be able to say, you know what? I, I, I, alright, I learned something through this.

I say, it's just like I say when something like that, you just miss the mark and you move on. Mm-hmm. Yep. You miss the mark. That's what I say when things happen like that and I just move on.

Yeah. Yep, you miss the mark and move on. Right. And you don't just sort of sit down there. You don't sit down there and sort of have a pity party and then stay there for the rest of your life just thinking about all the things that you failed about.

[40 : 45] Right? No, no, you just get up and move on and fix, you know, fix your eyes on the Lord and take the next step. Right? Exactly. All right.

One or two last comments and then we need to... Rick? I've had a number of you might go dead ends in my career life but as I look back on every one of the dead ends I realize that God taught me a really important lesson that I would never learn if I didn't think that I was called to make it work.

So we tend to think that our career path has to be this linear one ever upwards, you know, I'm going to be a lawyer and then I'm going to be that partner and then I'm going to be a Supreme Court lawyer and I'm going to be justice or whatever and so we need to deal with calls in that direction and we start in the law school and end up us and we end up being, you know, a carpenter and as a result of having gone to law school for X months, it turns out that God can use us as we're a carpenter perhaps sharing the gospel with other people.

So who knows how it's going to be. God's plan is always so much more, as I look back on the post, I see this sense of humor and sense of creative work and the way he's led me specifically in the things that some of them have linear career paths would look like.

They just never are. Yeah. Clay. I kind of like washing dishes and don't really mind so I just wonder what kind of Sunday morning pancakes would be.

[42 : 30] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. All right. Well, let's, that's a good, that's a good way to end. It's 9.50 so I'm going to close this on trying to end so we have time to get upstairs and greet each other.

All right, let's pray. Lord, thank you for creating us. Thank you. Lord, you're a great and marvelous God as we look at your works in creation and redemption and Lord, we can only imagine how we will see your works one day perfected in glory.

You are a great and marvelous and wise God. We thank you for the part that you give us to participate in a small part of the work that you are doing that you sustain us and strengthen us to do.

Lord, we thank you for your mercy in the frustrations that you send our way or providentially use in our lives to humble us and to ultimately to turn us to find joy and rest in you alone as our Savior.

We pray that you would continue to work out your good purposes in our lives. Equip us for what you have called us to do. Give us courage.

[43 : 56] Help us grow in humility. Help us grow in understanding ourselves, even understanding our gifts and our desires. Help us to be able to see those more clearly as we look, as we see you more clearly and to be able to make wise decisions when we have decisions that we need to make in light of those.

Help us see the needs of the world more clearly as well. Sometimes we blind ourselves to those and help us to have courage to seek to meet them as you enable us.

Thank you for this time. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.