



CREATION, FALL, REDEMPTION, NEW CREATION

A 4 week
THEOLOGY OF WORK COURSE
from





Session 0 What's the Point of Work?



Does your work ever feel pointless? This course reminds you that it's not only what you were created to do in the beginning, but is an essential part of your participation in God's story. This course traces the concept, meaning and purpose of work through the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.



This course provides a foundation in Theology of Work. This will give you with a sense of meaning and purpose about your work through the arc of the Bible's storyline



This course uses the key concepts and themes of Creation, Fall, Redemption and New Creation to explore the way that God created us all to work. Additionally we will be exploring power, wealth, contentment, rest and labour.

Structure

Session 1 - Wired to Work (Creation)

Session 2 - Frustrated Work (Fall)

Session 3 - Work as Love (Redemption)

Session 4 - The Future of Work (New Creation)





Watch Andrew's talk explaining the purpose of this course, what we will cover and how our attitudes to work may be at odds with God's intended purpose for work.



When we think about work, we likely think about Finances, Fulfillment, Fame, our Family and Force. As Christians in the workplace it's hard to avoid these issues but how do these issues affect our relationship to work, our colleagues and God?

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do I live to work?
- Do I work to live?
- Do I expect to find fulfillment in my work?
- Do I expect to be influential in my work?
- Am I expecting more from my work than God promises?

Let's Get started

If you're still wondering what the point of work is, it's time to move to the first session in this course, Wired to Work (Creation). Ready? Let's get to work.



Session 1 Wired to Work (Creation)



In this session we'll explore the nature of our personhood, as people made in the image of God. To do this we need to get a better understanding of God himself. We regularly think about God's glory, kindness, holiness and heart for the lost, but how often do we think of God as a worker? The God who made us in His image made us workers, like Him.



This session provides an understanding of both the nature of God and of humans as workers, fulfilling an important purpose. God's work is important and we were created to fulfill His mandate to work.



Psalm 104: 1-6 & 10-14

¹Praise the Lord, my soul.

Lord my God, you are very great;

you are clothed with splendor and majesty.

²The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment;

he stretches out the heavens like a tent

³ and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.

He makes the clouds his chariot

and rides on the wings of the wind.

⁴ He makes winds his messengers,

flames of fire his servants.

⁵ He set the earth on its foundations:

it can never be moved.

⁶ You covered it with the watery depths as with a garment;



the waters stood above the mountains. they sing among the branches.

- ¹⁰ He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains.
- ¹¹They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
- ¹² The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches.
- ¹³ He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.
- ¹⁴ He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate bringing forth food from the earth:
- ¹⁵ wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.

Genesis 2:4-15

- ⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.
- ⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.
- ⁸ Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.





Watch Andrew's talk exploring the theology of how we are "Wired to Work"



"Whether it's a symphony or a coal mine, all work is an act of creating and comes from the same source:...the capacity to see, to connect and to make what had not been seen, connected and made before" (Ayn Rand).

Rand is not a Christian, what do you think of her understanding of "creation"? How does this quote illustrate what people made in the image of God do and why?



There are several key truths to take from this session:

- We are workers because God is a worker. He is THE worker par excellence.
- The goal of God's work is to display His glory
- God works to serve the needs of others. Jesus came not to be served but to serve.



Reflect on your goals for your work, what motivates you to work?
Reflect on the idea that God made us **to** work, primarily to serve Him and the needs of others.

Reflect on the humility that Christ showed in His work and consider how this could be shown in the way you do your work.



Dear God, Thank you for making us in our image. You made us with an inherent joy in a job well done. Thank you for providing for our physical needs through work. Please help us to learn how to work as you would, to serve you and others and give us wisdom in knowing how that looks in our work.



Session 2 Frustrated Work (The Fall)



In this session we will discover the ways that work has been corrupted by the fall, and cause frustration with our working lives. Work can feel pointless, fruitless and thankless, but there is a reason why work is like this, which is revealed in the Scriptures.



This session provides a grounding in how the doctrine of "the fall" affects us, especially its impact on our working lives. God's mandate to work still remains, but it is subjected to a purposeful frustration.



Genesis 3:17-19

To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it', Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."



Watch Andrew's talk exploring the theology of why our work is frustrated and frustrating after the fall.





"If the point of work is to serve and exalt ourselves, then our work inevitably becomes less about the work and more about us. Our aggressiveness will eventually become abuse, our drive will become burnout, and our self-sufficiency will become self-loathing" (Timothy Keller).

Reflect on this quote, can you think of any people you know/have heard of who are like this? Has the progression from one state to the other happened to them?



- God frustrated our work because of our disobedient hearts, not because he is anti-industry or against creativity
- God gave us over to the sinful desires of our hearts to make a name for ourselves
- Working for own own purposes will lead to dissatisfaction



Ask yourself these diagnostic questions:

- How hard do you push your colleagues, your staff? Why?
- How hard do you push yourself? Why?
- Does your self-worth rise and fall on the success, or failure, of your work? Why?



Heavenly Father, we have sinned and turned away from you, but we know you bring redemption. Please help us to be humbled under the weight of our sin and become aware of ways we may be sinning at work, either in having the wrong perspective or in not loving people who are our colleagues, employees or employers. We pray that you will remind us of the hope we have in your Son, and remind us to humble ourselves and submit to you.



Session 3: Work as Love (Redemption)



This session explores the redemptive purpose of work as intended by God and achieved through Christ's work on the cross. The Gospel changes and shapes our work in ways we could never anticipate, because of the powerful work of the Holy Spirit through us.



In this session, we see that because of Jesus' redemptive work on the Cross, our personal relationship with God is transformed as well as the fruits of our daily labour.



John 17:1-5

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the **work** you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.



Watch Andrew's talk explaining how Christ's death was His predestined work to glorify God and serve others.



Andrew Cameron writes:

Everyone helps to create the conditions for caring communities...Modern people, Christians included, have become poor at articulating the primary outcomes of their work. When asked 'What's your work for?' most can offer its secondary outcomes of



fulfilment, reputation and consumption. Few consider how their work related to created or social order

Do you think this statement is true? How does your work relate to the way God created society to function? How would you articulate the purpose of your work in this way?



This session provided a lot of different quotes from contemporary and historical theologians about the importance of even the most banal tasks.

- God glorifies himself in seemingly unimportant tasks when our hearts are in Him
- God's presence in and through our work elevates the value of work done in the way
 He intended
- God's work is motivated by Love
- We can express our motivation by loving "by, "in" and "through" our work



As the application for this session, take some time to consider how much you are conscious of loving others through your work. If you cannot see an obvious way to do this, reach out to us. We'd love to help you think through it.

Some initial questions you could ask yourself are:

- Who benefits from my work? If not directly, consider how people may be blessed indirectly
- Why does my job exist? What purpose is it intended for?
- How can I work on loving either my colleagues, clients or customers through my work? Is there anything I need to change?



Heavenly Father, help us to grasp your great love for humanity and the way that the work of your hands expressed that love and made it effective for our salvation. Please bless us with insight and motivation in how to love others "by" "in" and "through" our daily labour, both in our workplace and in our homes.



Session 4: The future of work (New Creation)



This session explores a controversial issue about faith and work. Does our earthly labour have value in the new heavens and the new earth? We'll explore whether our work has eternal value through Scripture and the insights of key experts in faith and work.



This session provides an understanding of the value of our work in the light of eternity.



Revelation 21: 22-27

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.



Watch Andrew's talk and see where you stand on the issue of our work in the light of eternity. If the new heavens and earth is a city, will we work there? What of our work will endure into eternity?





Mark Stephens writes:

We must seek to align our work, as best we can, with the broad contours of God's completion of creation...One can work now in ways that, at the very least, anticipate the future.

What do you think of this quote?

How do you understand it in the context of your own work?



- N.T Wright argues that "Every act of love, gratitude and kindness... will find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation" and makes a case for our deeds surviving into eternity
- Gavin Perkins counter argues that "There is virtually no continuity between the present and the new creation. The new creation is truly new. The old passes away; it is burned up and dissolved"
- Andrew interprets 2 Peter 3:7 to mean that "the destruction to come which Peter warns of relates to sin and evil rather than the physical creation".
- In summary, our good works "act as signposts to the future...as we work with love, kindness, justice and truth. This matters because it gives a glimpse now of what the future will be like"

Application

- Does this insight about our good works acting as signposts to eternity motivate you in your current work?
- What value do you ascribe to the seemingly less significant aspects of your work? (invoices paid, reports written, emails sent)
- Can you see how the seemingly less significant aspects of your work have significance for the impact they have on other people?





Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making us in your image to be workers like you. Thank You that despite the horror and frustration of living in a fallen world, Jesus' redemptive work on the cross brought us back into relationship with you. Thank you that our work is meaningful now, because we do it in worship of you and as redeemed people expressing our faith. We pray that you will continue to work in and through us as we await your return and the new creation. Come, Lord Jesus!

