



#1 WORK

God or Gift

Gen. 2:15 + Col. 3:23-24

3.16.2014

INTRODUCTION

Q. God or Gift? God or Gift?

• That's the question we're going to be continually asking over the next five weeks, as we look at some of the *MOST WORSHIPED* and *SOUGHT AFTER THINGS* in our world.

**WORK, RELATIONSHIPS, MONEY, SEX, and ALCOHOL.*

• Let me give you two reasons from two passages to answer the question "why do this sermon series?"

1. So that each one of us may realize the glorious truth that is this: EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS, EXISTS FOR JESUS.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent (most worshiped and supreme!). ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. – **Colossians 1:15-20**

The Apostle Paul is saying this:

Every single person, thing, and idea in every place at every moment exists *FOR* the once-crucified, now-living, ruling, and reigning King—Jesus. (repeat)

Here's what this means for us: Everything exists for a reason. Everything has an ultimate purpose. Everything is created by Jesus and for Jesus. There is not a square inch in your whole life that is meaningless.

1. EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS, EXISTS FOR JESUS.

2. So that each of us may realize that sobering truth this is this: EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS, CAN BE TURNED INTO AN IDOL.

Romans 1:21-25 ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools...²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Every single person, thing, and idea in every place at every moment can easily be turned into an idol—a little "g" god.

An idol (a false) is anything or anyone we're looking to for security, worth, and identity, other than Jesus.

IDOLS are not inherently bad things. Typically, idols are good things that we turn into ultimate things—gifts we turn into gods.

500 years ago, John Calvin nailed it when he said "The human heart is a perpetual factory of idols."

To sum it all up, this series exists to help us obey God's Word through the Apostle John:

"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

JUMP INTO OUR FIRST WEEK: "WORK" Q. Does Jesus care about what we do every day?

1. THE APPROACH TO WORK

Q. How do people approach work? Q. How should we as Christians approach work?

THERE ARE BASICALLY THREE MAIN APPROACHES TO WORK:

1. RECEIVE WORK AS A GOD: 1) My security, worth, and identity come from my work—how well I do, how much money I make, how I advance in the company or profession, how others perceive my work matters immensely.

THEREFORE: *Work is everything.* I work as hard as I can for as long as I can, to get as much security, worth, and identity as I can. I rest so that I don't burn out; I rest so I can work.

No matter your vocation (teacher, doctor, construction worker, artist, stay-at-home-mom) you're going to be tempted to receive your work as a god.

ILLUSTRATE

• **JOEPATERNO:** Losing a game is heartbreaking. Losing your sense of excellence or worth is a tragedy.

EXPOSE

One scary thing about receiving your work as a god, is the reality that everything you've worked for your entire life can be taken away from you in a moment. Either by force or failure.

• **JOEP:** My name. I have spent my whole life trying to make that name mean something. And now it's gone.

Another scary thing—**THE SCARIEST THING**—about receiving your work as a god, is the reality that the security, worth, and identity you need and you're longing for cannot be achieved by your work.

Matthew 16:26 “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

APPLY

We have to realize that work cannot bear the full weight of our soul—work is a terrible god that cannot deliver what you really truly need.

2. REJECT WORK AS A GOD: 1) My security, worth, and identity come from Jesus alone—how well I do, how much money I make, how I advance in the company or profession, how others perceive my work does not ultimately matter.

THEREFORE: *Work is necessary.* I work so I can provide for myself and my family, so I can have money to do things I like to do, so I can give some money to the church/missions, and while I'm there I can love and evangelize my colleagues.

ILLUSTRATE

• **I'VE GOT A BUDDY WHO HAS A REALLY GOOD JOB:** “I hate work. I just work and try to do well so I can take care of my family and go play. That's the only reason I'm here.”

EXPOSE

The sad thing about my friend, and about many people, is that **we have a distorted view of work.** We simply see it as **NECESSARY** to get money or take care of certain responsibilities. But seeing work only necessary is not how Jesus designed things.

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

3. REDEEM WORK AS A GIFT: My security, worth, and identity come from Jesus alone. Work is not a god. But Jesus has *WIRED* me for work.

THEREFORE: Work is a gift. I work so I can be a blessing to my family, my church, and at the same time, I work in order to partner with God in cultivating his creation and loving my neighbor.

Christians *SHOULD* reject work as a god. But we're not meant to stop there. We should also *REDEEM* work as a gift, realizing Jesus has wired us for work.

Genesis 2:15 “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”

ILLUSTRATE

When we embrace that we're wired for work, we'll start to have a new vision for our work.

“The material creation was made by God to be developed, cultivated, and cared for in an endless number of ways through human labor. But even the simplest of these ways is important. Without them all, human life cannot flourish.” – **Tim Keller**

APPLY

It doesn't matter how simple you think your work is—most of Jesus' good works were as a carpenter, not a prophet.

Q. Are you *receiving* work as a god?

It can't give you what you're seeking—what you truly need.

Q. Are you *rejecting* work as a god?

Work is not *JUST* necessary. Don't fall into the trap.

Q. Are you *redeeming* work as a gift?

Work is more than necessary. You're wired to work for Jesus' glory and the good of all people.

2. THE MOTIVATION FOR WORK

ILLUSTRATE

- **Motivation is among the most important factors** concerning your work ethic.
- **Imagine the difference in your work ethic...**working the same job for someone that treats you like *GARBAGE* and is short-tempered with you, or someone that treats you like you're *VALUED* and is *GRACIOUS* with you.

Q. Who are you going to work harder for?

- Imagine two identical people in two identical rooms doing identical work.
#1 is told that they're going to work 9-5 everyday for one year, and if they do well they'll make \$30,000.
#2 is told that they're going to work 9-5 everyday for one year, and if they do well they'll make \$30,000, plus their work is doing a small but much needed part in ending world hunger.

Q. Which one is going to work harder, be more efficient, and more joyful in their work?

Who your boss is matters. What you're working for and towards matters.

EXPLAIN

Q. What's the Christian's motivation for work?

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."

Q. What's the Christian's motivation for work? **A.** Jesus. We work for Jesus.

1. Jesus is our boss—ultimately we don't work for our earthly boss, we work for Jesus.

Your earthly boss doesn't always deserve a good days' work; but Jesus always deserves a good days' work.

2. Our work is not in vain—since Jesus created us to work, our work is partnering with him in bringing joy and healing to the world.

Whatever you do, we need that. You're a blessing. Do what you do well—for the glory of Jesus and the good of others.

APPLY (What could it look like to "serve the Lord Christ" at work?)

8 Ways to Serve Jesus at Work...

1. Help end injustices and suffering in your work and through your work
2. Be personally honest and evangelize whoever you're near
3. Do skillful, excellent work
4. Create beauty
5. Work from a Christian motivation to glorify God, seeking to change and influence culture to that end
6. Work with a grateful, joyful, gospel-changed heart through the ups and downs
7. Do whatever gives you the greatest joy and passion
8. Make as much money as you can, so that you can be as generous as you can

3. THE POWER TO WORK

Q. How are we going to do this? Where are we going to get the inner strength to work with this approach and this motivation? What if we fail?

If we work approach work the correct way and have the proper motivation...we are still going to have this deep insecurity and fear of failing.

Q. How are we going to work—and work hard—without being crippled by a fear of failure?

Here it is:

The True Work—the work underneath all of our work—is already finished in Jesus.

John 17:4 “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

The work that we REALLY need to accomplish, being reconciled to God now and forever, is already finished by Jesus. He worked perfectly, to give us that perfection.

Your acceptance with God does not depend on how well you work or how hard you work or how much you accomplish.

You'll never have the right approach, the proper motivation, and the never-ending power to work unless you see and trust that Jesus has already finished the work you truly needed to do.

When you see Jesus and his finished work, you can then work hard and effectively, freed from any fear of not being good enough.

That's true power. That's power the world can't offer.

It's found only in and through Jesus.