



5 | GENESIS 2:8-17

JESUS AND WORK

You will never be happy until you surrender to God's calling and the gifts he's given you. Our highest joy comes from knowing God and doing his work in his way.

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Call to Worship

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! ¹² Young men and maidens together, old men and children! ¹³ Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven. —Psalm 148:11-13

Songs

I Want to Know You
Work for the Night is Coming
Beyond the Stars
Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

Introduction

Do you ever feel overworked, over-regulated, under-leisured, under-benefited? Take heart. This notice was found in the ruins of a London office building. It was dated 1852.¹ Imagine seeing this sign posted at your workplace! At the time these were considered “utopian” labor laws for London, they were so amazing.

THE NEW LONDON “UTOPIAN” LABOR LAWS

1. This firm has reduced the hours of work, and the clerical staff will now only have to be present between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays.
2. Clothing must be of a sober nature. The clerical staff will not disport themselves in raiment of bright colors.
3. A stove is provided for the benefit of the clerical staff. Coal and wood must be kept in the locker. It is recommended that each member of the clerical staff bring four pounds of coal each day during the cold weather.
4. No talking is allowed during business hours.
5. Now that the hours of business have been drastically reduced, the partaking of food is allowed between 11:30 and noon, but work will not on any account cease.
6. The owners recognize the generosity of the new labor laws but will expect a great rise in output of work to compensate for these near Utopian conditions.

Work sometimes is so **difficult**, but it is actually a **blessing** from God that **preceded the fall**. This truth is foundational for **faithful stewardship** in your calling and placement. Work is not a result of humankind’s fall into sin. Work is central in Genesis 1 and 2. There it is—**Adam is working—right in the midst of paradise**, right in the picture of God’s intentions for how things ought to be. Work is a gift from God. Work is something we were built for, something our loving Creator intends for our good.

Work is usually a low priority for many people. We hear songs about “working for the weekend.” You read so **many books how to be a good parent**, and where are the books **on enjoying work** for the glory of God? Just think, when was the last time, if ever, you read a book on this particular subject?

This might seem like a strange point to make, but just consider for a moment how much space **the New Testament gives to the topic of work compared to the subject of parenting**. In the New Testament there are only **two major passages** that deal with **how to raise children** (Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21), yet there are at least **seven passages that address the topic of work** (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; 1 Thess 4:9-11; 2 Thess 3:6-13; 1 Tim 6:1-21; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Pet 2:11-12, 18-21). Obviously, God knows we need more reminders to glorify him in our work than in raising children since we are naturally inclined to nurture our children.

The earth is a place of worship that God made for us, and we are called to work hard to make it a place that reflects our creator. **This is why all our work is to be turned into worship**. We are **all priests of God**, in his garden temple, so all we do should contribute to the expansion of his kingdom. We work for Christ, so **Christ, not work, is the center of happiness**. Our careers do not define us. I knew a man who was a **truck driver until forty**, and then he was laid off. He became a master carpenter of repairing antiques. **Our careers do not define us. Jesus defines us**. Our worship defines us wherever we work.

¹ Afzal Mahmood, *Bits and Pieces* (Pakistan: The Globe, 1996), 13-15. These are only six of the fourteen points that were posted!

A lot of people make the mistake of trying to make work the center of life. At the end of the day, **most of what we do for work is forgotten**. As C.T. Studd's famous poem goes:

Only one life 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last.²

Your dream job is not going to satisfy you. It can't. Go ahead and dream. **You may say, if only I could work the dayshift**, then everything would be better. Wrong. If only I could work the night shift, then all would be better. Wrong. If only I had that promotion life would be better. Not true. If only I had my own business, I would be happy. Not true. If only I wasn't unemployed, then I would really be happy. Wrong again. If only, if only... Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong. **Happiness comes from Christ, not from your dream job**. There is no dream job. It's a sham. Work can bring great joy, but only if it's done for Jesus.

GOD'S ORDER OF CREATION: Image, Gender, Marriage, Rest, Work

In Genesis 2, we've seen the various pillars of God's design for life. We've seen man is **made in God's image**, so every human being is precious. **Gender** is another pillar of creation—God made man male and female. **Marriage is between a man and a woman** for as long as they live. Then we saw that **God commands us to rest** one day out of seven. We are called to work six days and rest the seventh. If you work too hard, you are crazy. If you don't like to work, you are lazy. Don't be crazy or lazy. Work hard and rest well!

The next order of God's design for creation is the **work in the garden God gave man to enjoy**. Adam is **living in Paradise**, and he's told the best thing you can do to glorify and worship me is to work and tend and keep the garden.

Key thought: You will never be happy until you surrender to God's calling and the gifts he's given you. Our highest joy comes from knowing God and doing his work in his way.

1. THE PLEASURE OF WORK (2:8)

Pleasure in work? Really?! God made us to **creative creatures in worshipping him through work and worship and family**, and to spread this worship through the earth. That's the creation mandate. God made everything for us to enjoy—to show us how good and how great he is. God creates a domain for man to work in called "Eden."

Man is put in the garden to tend it (2:15). **The name Eden means "Delight."** As soon as God names the garden Adam is to work in it.

WORK'S DELIGHT SHOULD NOT COME FROM LOCATION

Work is not about location (a place), but vocation (your calling from God). Work's pleasure should not be based on location, but on the person you are working for.

Genesis 2:8 | And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Paul says that wherever we are and whatever we do, it should be for God's glory.

1 Corinthians 10:31 | Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

² C.T. Studd, "Only One Life," *Quaint Rhymes for the Battlefield* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1914), 58.

In other words, happiness from work comes from who you are working *for* (God), not where the location you are working *at*.

Some of you have **dreamed of a work transfer**—maybe **going west to the mountains** or south to the warmer climates, but Adam had Paradise in Eden. No one knows where Eden was originally located but we do know it was **beautiful**. Responsible guessers place Eden’s location in **Mesopotamia near the head of the Persian Gulf in Iraq**.³ But it was so long ago, we cannot be sure. We also must allow for **topographical change** like what might have come from the great flood in Noah’s day.⁴

What we do know is that man is that **Eden was created for man to worship God and to work for God**. We worship him in our work. In Christ, God has something for all of us to do for his glory. **Adam worked for God’s glory before the fall**. We are all called to turn our work into worship. Work should be a joy to all of us!

You may have a difficult joy or a really difficult employer. **Do you have a good attitude about work? You should!** Who do you work for? We get a paycheck from our company, but we ought to be working and honoring God. Do you worship God through your occupation? We are called to work as “unto the Lord” and not simply for our boss or for a paycheck (Eph 6:5-9).

WORK’S DELIGHT SHOULD COME FROM CHRIST

Do you delight in your work? **Work’s delight does not come from location, but from the person** we work for.

Colossians 3:23-24 | Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

To live and work in this garden was a delight! **Everything, including work, can only be enjoyed by putting God first**. There is pleasure in work. This is the foundation for the **Protestant work ethic**. We count work as a form of worship. We’re not just “working for the weekend.” We live for God in work and play—not just Sunday but every day.

This was a place not just for work, but everything Adam did would be an expression of worship. It was a special place for fellowship where Yahweh could meet with Adam. Eden is later called, the “**Garden of God**” in (Eze 28:13; 31:9), indicating God as its Owner, and the true provider for Adam.⁵

2. THE PROVISION FOR WORK (2:9-14)

God put Adam in the garden to enjoy it and to serve God by cultivating it. When you think garden don’t think a plot of land with rows of tomatoes and beans and corn but a glorious, enriched parkland. The name “Eden” seems to be related to the Sumerian idea of *edin* or “delightful plain.”⁶ **Think Botanic Gardens**. Think **Morton Arboretum**. On a smaller level, think of the **Cantigny Gardens**. Eden had glorious, expansive, sprawling, idyllic paradise of paths and fruitful trees and **unimaginable flowers and fragrances**. The Lord put man in a perfect place to worship him. Everything was provided for him.⁷

³ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 66-67.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 53.

⁵ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 199.

⁶ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 67.

⁷ Carter, “Men and Women”, *Genesis*.

A PROVISION OF FOOD

Genesis 2:9a | And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

Imagine already cultivated vineyards and botanical gardens with **oranges and lemons, mangos, and coconuts**. **No sin** has entered into the world, so there are **no weeds** and **no thorn bushes**. All of Adam's needs would be met in this glorious garden. As we work for God, he promises to meet all our needs as well. **It is not Adam that provides the food through his work, but God that provides the food** as Adam's work is blessed by God.

Psalm 34:10b | Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Philippians 4:19 | My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

No matter how hard life gets in this broken world, remember **you have a Father with unlimited resources**. He will provide for his own children and not leave us as orphans. He calls us to cry and groan to him, **"Abba, Father!"** (Rom 8:14). He indeed is a good, good, Father.

In Eden is the Garden of God. This is the place where man works, but more importantly, this is the place where God meets with man.⁸ In Eden, Adam's place of work, there is ample nourishment for his **aesthetic, intellectual, physical and spiritual appetites**. The work before Adam, and us, is **meant to nourish our body and mind**.⁹

A PROVISION OF LIFE

Genesis 2:9b | The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Suddenly, we find Adam **given choices in the garden: two trees**. The choices are life and death. The tree of life gives life. The other, a tree representing the wisdom and control that belongs to God alone, if partaken, will be **a tree of death**, because it represents man's rebellious desire to take the place of God, and it brings the curse of death.

The **tree of life beautifully represents our constant dependence** on God. As Christians we are restored to Christ himself who is a kind of tree of life to us. We need to go to him daily for this life.

But **the tree of God's knowledge** is too much for us. It shows disregard for omniscience of God and is **a "declaration of independence" from God** who is provider. By choosing that Adam cuts off himself as a dependent being. He can never declare himself independent from God. The moment he did, he thrust the human race into chaos.

Adam would lose access to the tree of life, which would later be guarded with **at the consummation the tree will appear again**:

Revelation 2:7 | To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (*cf* 22:2, 14, 19).

Revelation 22:14 | Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

⁸ Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 161.

⁹ Kidner, *Genesis*, 66.

Praise God that through **Jesus Christ we have obtained access again to the tree of life**. Life is restored to us through Jesus as in the beginning. He is our eternal life, and that life dwells in us by his Spirit.

A PROVISION OF ABUNDANT RESOURCES

We work, but God provides the resources that we work with. We see this in verses 10-14. A river flows out of Eden, and this river reflects the abundance of God's presence and provision. Adam was in paradise! This is indeed "the **garden of the LORD**" (13:10)!

Genesis 2:10-14 | A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

There is so much abundance, which tells us that everyone has a much larger work to do than just their trade or their calling. God is a God of abundance.

We are "**not to live by bread alone**, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Mt 4:4; cf Deut 8:3).

Christ came not to merely give us good jobs, but he came that we "may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10). We are not just to eke out a living, but to have true life in Christ.

These rivers **demonstrate God's incredible abundance**. Eden's river flows out of the garden into **four rivers** (the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates) that water the entire area.¹⁰

There are rich resources that God provides: gold, bdellium (a fragrant resin), and onyx. We know what gold is. Bdellium is a fragrant resin that comes from a tree and is used for various incense-making and perfumery like frankincense and myrrh.¹¹ So Adam has all these resources: beautiful stone for building, sweet resin to smell good, and gold for decoration and enrichment.

WHY ALL THE DETAIL?

Why all the detail in geography and the domestic products of Eden and the surrounding area?

First to remember life that God lacks nothing, and he freely gives to his children. "The **Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want**" (Psa 23:1). **God is so, so good in giving us such abundance**. He's a good, good Father. God wants us to see how beautifully cared for we are. Why oh why would we ever do what Adam is about to do and leave it all behind?

Second, to remember that **this is real history**. It really happened. Soon Moses will tell us of the fall of humanity into sin through Adam, and he wants us to know **this is real history, in a real place, with real people** and **real pain**. This is not a myth of the made-up gods of Egypt. This is the one true God, and this is real, genuine history.

Third, to remember the radical **devastation of our fall into sin**. We lost everything. We lost all this abundance. We lose fellowship with God and all his blessings. It's so bad.

The spiritual fall of humanity is not far around the corner, and it's going to be **the greatest fall from grace ever**. This paradise abounding with life and joy is about to be turned into a graveyard of death and pain, perspiration, and toil. It's a harbinger of what's about to be lost.

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 53.

¹¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 124.

3. THE PURPOSE OF WORK (2:15)

Work is not mainly about making money. It's about being faithful to God with the gifts he's given to you. How can we be faithful. As we go to work, we are there to reflect God's providence.

TO REFLECT GOD'S PROVIDENCE

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

God took the man and **placed him in the garden**. Often the question is asked to young people, "**What are you going to do when you grow up?**" The correct answer is **whatever God has prepared for me** to do. God gives gifts to all of us. But those gifts mean nothing unless God places us somewhere.

The understanding of God's providence is simply that God directs "**all things after the counsel of his own will**" (Eph 1:11). Or we could say that our all our open doors and opportunities that lead to our righteous life of good works are "**prepared ahead of time for us to do**" (Eph 2:10). Jerry Bridges in his book *Trusting God* described the doctrine of God's providence this way.

God's providence is his constant care for and his absolute rule over all his creation for his own glory and the good of his people.¹²

God wants to lead every detail of your life for your abundance and good and for his glory. So wherever he has placed you for work, trust him. He's got you where he wants you.

ILLUSTRATION: NATIONAL BULLET PROOF

I remember when I was just out of college. Jill and I **desperately wanted to go to the mission field** of Spain. She had gotten her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. My undergrad was in Theology and Spanish. We had the giftings to be missionaries. But God had providentially placed us outside of the mission field for three years. I needed to pay off school bills, so I was an **iron worker at National Bullet Proof** fabricating and installing bullet resistant doors and windows. Jill worked in a doctor's office. The skills we gained in those three years were vital and providential. I really learned so many skills of using power tools as well as installing and plumbing and minor electric. That job gave me the skills I needed to have to care for my family as a husband and a father. God's providence is perfect. **He guides all of our steps**, so trust in him with all your heart (Pro 3:5-6).

TO REJOICE IN GOD'S PROVISION

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

God wants us to delight in all that he gives us, especially our work. Eden literally means "Delight". Do you delight and rejoice in the work God has given you?

Work Attitude. What is your work attitude? Are you spreading the "aroma of Christ" wherever you go, or does your attitude stink? Listen to Paul

¹² Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2016), 13.

2 Corinthians 2:15 | We are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing

We are called to “**rejoice in the Lord always**” (Phil 4:4). Our life is to be a life of abundance of joy in the Lord. Remember the words of Nehemiah, “**the joy of the LORD is your strength**” (Neh 8:10). All we need is our vision on Christ, and suddenly we are energized by the joy of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:58 | Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

God put Adam in the garden before the fall to work. **Work is not a product of the fall.** It is how we were originally made to glorify God and bring joy to man. We are all called to work. We should have a joyful attitude for work in whatever God gives our hands to do. Remember the words of Paul.

Ephesians 6:5-7 | Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man.

Statistics. Not everyone wants to work with joy, but we should since we will work quite a bit in our lifetime. It is estimated that a person will spend about 100,000 hours at employment in his lifetime, and that’s only a 43-hour work week. Most of us work plenty more than that. But just on a 43-hour work week, that would be like working without stopping for over 11 years!

Work Clothes. What do you wear to work? When Paul speaks to slaves, he tells them that they should “**adorn**” themselves with the “**doctrine of God our Savior.**” Put on Jesus Christ. He’s speaking specifically to slaves, in the **one of the worst possible employment systems** that can be considered.

Titus 2:9-10 | Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that **in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.**

Worship transforms everything about us. It transforms our attitude. We need to paint an accurate picture of Christ with our work. Does your life “adorn” the gospel of Jesus Christ? Yes, we have human bosses and overseers. But ultimately, the Christian is working for God.

Adam’s boss was Yahweh, and we have the same boss! When someone asks us, “Who do you work for?” We ought to be able to answer, “I serve Christ as a (fill in the type of work you do) with all my heart.”

4. THE PROBATION OF WORK (2:16-17)

Adam tended the garden and worked for the glory of God. But there was a test. Could he be content with God’s provisions?

Adam had permission to enjoy everything freely. There was only one prohibition, one tree that was off limits. Can Adam be content with all the bounty that God has given him?

Genesis 2:16 | And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden...”

God gave the command that would prove the love of humanity that he created. Choose to trust God. Enjoy all the trees of the garden but leave the ultimate rule to God alone.

THE DELIGHT OF CONTENTMENT

We are all called to contentment, whatever state of prosperity or poverty we find ourselves in.

1 Timothy 6:8 | But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

Paul famously reminds the Philippians and us to be content in every situation in life.

Philippians 4:11-13 | I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Adam is to be content with all the trees of the garden and to leave the tree of knowledge to God. This implies that Adam is to be submissive in his covenantal relationship with God.

THE DESTRUCTION OF DISCONTENTMENT

Genesis 2:17 | But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Discontentment is the root of every sin. God is just not enough for a person, so **they are willing to sin to get what they want**.

Thomas Watson in his book *The Art of Divine Contentment* says that discontentment is a form of the idolatry of the heart.

Discontentment takes the heart wholly off from God and fixes it on the present trouble, so that a man’s mind is not upon his prayer but upon his cross.¹³

We begin to worship earthly comfort instead of our heavenly Comforter. **Adam became discontent and plunged the human race** into total depravity. Look at the incredible **damage of Adam’s discontentment**. Adam had all the trees of the garden, but he wanted the one that would put him on the same level of God and give him a **“declaration of independence”** from his creator. Jeremiah Burroughs from his book titled *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* put it this way.

If a man is to be free from discontentment and worry it is not enough merely not to complain and murmur, but he must be active in sanctifying God’s name in the affliction. This is the main thing that brings quietness of heart and helps against discontentment.¹⁴

In other words, **the quiet of contentment comes from worship**. Discontentment is rooted in misplaced affections and misplaced worship. **Discontentment is a failure to seek the things above**, rather than the things that are on the earth (Col 3:1-3). And our affections, for better or worse, are always a matter of the heart. Remember what Jesus said about the heart.

Matthew 6:21 | For where your treasure is, there is your heart also.

Adam is called to work for God, to tend the vast, rich, expansive garden, and to do so joyfully, enjoying Yahweh’s generous gifts. This teaches us that we are to be content with all that God gives

¹³ Thomas Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment* (United Kingdom: A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, 1731), 66.

¹⁴ Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (United Kingdom: H.G. Bohn, 1845), 31.

us and not dare let our hearts stray toward discontentment. Gratitude is one of the greatest guards against sin.

Conclusion

We all have a workplace God where wants us to labor for him. Your workplace is your mission field. You don't have to work as a preacher to be close to God. Most of Jesus' life, he was a carpenter. Paul was a tentmaker.

Let me close by encouraging you with a verse about **agricultural work** from 2 Corinthians 3:6 which says in essence, "**Some plant and some water, but God gives the increase**" (1 Cor 3:6). The Lord has to give the growth for anything to happen. Yes we are called to work hard, but God has to bring the fruit.

A number of years ago, the Associated Press released a study done by an agricultural school in Iowa. It reported that **production of 100 bushels of corn** from just **one acre of land**, in addition to the many hours of the farmer's labor, required 4,000,000 lbs. of water, 6,800 lbs. of oxygen, 5,200 lbs. of carbon, 160 lbs. of nitrogen, 125 lbs. of potassium, 75 lbs. of yellow sulphur, and other elements too numerous to list. In addition to these things, which no man can produce, rain and sunshine at the right time are critical. **It was estimated that only 5% of the produce of a farm can be attributed to the efforts of man.** If we were honest, we'd have to admit that the same is true in producing spiritual fruit. It's just as Paul tells us: we are to give all we have, but God does all the real work.

Philippians 2:12-13 | Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Here's your challenge: give all you've got. Surrender all to God's work. Wherever you call home for employment, consider that God's mission field for you. **Moms and dads, there's so much work at home.** The greatest missionaries are missionary mom and dad. Don't make work something you worship but turn your work into an instrument for worshipping God. At work, you serve the Lord above and beyond whatever your boss desires.

We are not in Eden anymore. Earth is no longer a place of delight in work. Sometimes work is hard. But if we put God first in our lives, **we can truly enjoy our work for his honor and glory.**

Benediction

1 Corinthians 15:58 - *Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*