# Work

## Work and the gospel

### 1. Work is God-given, so it can be good (Gen 1:27-29, 2:15)

- Privilege

- Provision

### 2. Work is fallen, so it can be hard (Gen 3:17-19, Ecc 2:12-25)

- Frustrating

- Futile

**Implications:**

- Expect to enjoy it at times

- Expect not to enjoy it at times

- Don't be naïve about what your work can achieve for yourself or the world

  'Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?'
                                                                    Ecclesiastes 7:13

### 3. Working for Jesus is what matters

The gospel ought to radically shape how we think about work.

#### a) Because Jesus is Lord

'You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.'
                                                                    Matthew 22:37-38

'Your discipleship to Jesus is not just one more ball flying around in your life. It is not in competition with other responsibilities. This is your first responsibility, and all others are defined by it.'[1]

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[1] Gilbert & Traeger, *The Gospel at Work*

**b) Because of where the world is heading**

'Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is *not in vain*.'

1 Corinthians 15:58

'We are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building...like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he <u>builds</u> upon it...'

1 Corinthians 3:9-13

'Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge". This "knowledge" puffs up, but love <u>builds up</u>.'

1 Corinthians 8:1

'"All things are lawful", but not all things <u>build up</u>. Let no-one seek his own good but the good of his neighbour'.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

'Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy...the one who prophesies speaks to people for their <u>up-building</u> and encouragement and consolation. The one who speaks in a tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophesies <u>builds up</u> the church...The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be <u>built up</u>.'

1 Corinthians 14:1-5

In summary...

'When Paul tells the Corinthians to 'abound in the work of the Lord', he is not issuing a call to *general* Christian living in light of the resurrection. Rather, 'the work of the Lord' refers to *what believers do to advance the gospel among unbelievers and to establish believers in the gospel*.'[2]

'Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."'

Matthew 28:18-20

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[2] Peter Orr, "Abounding in the Work of the Lord (1 Cor 15:58): Everything We Do as Christians or Specific Gospel Work?" in *Themelios, Volume 38, Issue 2* (July 2013)

DISCUSSION

*Look up each of the following references. What do they tell us about how and why we are to work?*

Col 3:22-4:1, 1 Peter 2:18

1 Thess 4:11-12, 2 Thess 3:10-12, Titus 2:9-10, 1 Tim 6:1, Eph 4:28

Col 4:5-6, 1 Peter 3:15

## Three common pitfalls

1. Idleness

2. Idolatry

'The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh. Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and striving after wind.'

Ecclesiastes 4:5-6

**Rather:**
- Be sensible (not idle)
- Be sacrificial (not an idolater)

3. Identity

'Don't pass up a job that *isn't* personally fulfilling yet glorifies God and provides for your family. And don't pick a job that *is* personally fulfilling and doesn't do those basic things.'[3]

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[3] Gilbert & Traeger, *The Gospel at Work*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you more tempted to be a 'two hands' person or a 'no hands' person?

2. What will it look like to 'work with one hand' while at university?

3. Given what we've said about how the gospel affects our view of work, what might be some good questions to consider when we're choosing between jobs?