



Remember back to when you were a kid. There was that one question that people asked you and that you asked yourself all the time: What do you want to be when you grow up? What **did** you want to be when you grew up?

This past month I've talked with: an attorney who always wanted to be an attorney and seven years later, he hates his job; a stay-at-home mom who never dreamt it, but who loves her job; a technical writer who likes what he does, but has been out of work for months and is thinking of moving to Colorado. A few weeks ago I had lunch with a businessman who told me he wishes he had a job like mine because my job seems so meaningful to him; while I was sitting there thinking, "I wish I had a job like yours." The grass always looks greener.

Work is a huge part of our lives. If you're like me you started work at 15 and will work till you're 65—50 years of work. You'll still be working after your kids are raised; perhaps after a spouse has passed on.

Are you what you wanted to be when you grew up? What do you do for work, or want to do for work? What do you think about work? Where did you get your ideas about work?

This is our third sermon in Genesis. In a sense, these first two chapters of the Bible are about work: God is working; God is giving man work to do.

Many of us don't have a biblical view of work. Genesis gives us one. We're going to be working for a long time, so let's get hold of a biblical view of work. And you and I especially need this because of where we live. Why are you here in the Bay Area? Why did you move to the Bay Area? Why do people move to the Bay Area? People don't move here to relax, they move here to work!

If California were a nation, we'd have the world's 8th largest economy. The epicenter of this economy is the Bay Area. Yes, unemployment is at 12% here right now, but that will change. We, of all people, need a biblical understanding of work. Perhaps the most countercultural thing we can do here in the Bay Area, the best way we can reflect Jesus, is by living out the view of work and rest given here in Genesis 2.

### **The Origin of Work**

Where does work come from? Who invented work? The first two chapters of the Bible are about work. In these first two chapters, work is happening everywhere! Things are getting done. God is

hard at work. Think of all the fields God is working in: Astronomy, Marine Biology, The Arts, Zookeeper, Legislation, Venture Capital, Electrician. Our God is a working God!

**"These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—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. And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:4–9).**

What kind of work is God doing here? God has his hands in the dirt, forming man; God plants a garden. God is doing blue-collar work. Our God is not a white-collar God; he's a blue-collar God. For centuries there's been an historical bias against earthy, blue-collar work. But the Bible gives great dignity to all work.

Where does work come from? It comes from God, because God himself is a worker. God created work long before sin entered the world. Work is not a mistake because of sin. Work is God's gift to us. God gives us work, God calls us to work, because he himself is a worker and he wants us to have a share in what he's doing.

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to give us our daily bread. And he answers this prayer. He does it by means of the farmer who planted the grain, the truck drivers who hauled the crop, the factory workers in the food processing plant, the investors who are backing the whole operation, the advertisers, lawyers, and agricultural scientists who are supporting the whole operation, and the baker who turned the flour into bread—these workers were all instrumental in enabling you to butter your toast this morning.

Work comes from God. God the great workman gives us our daily bread, but he does this through a world full of workers.

## The Definition of Work

How would you define **work**? It's a hard word to define. There's a two-part definition that we can really use to get a handle on our work.

Genesis 2 reveals God as a gardener. God is doing gardening work in Genesis 2. And this is exactly the way God describes the work he gives us to do. God gives the man his job description. He's given two tasks. *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it"* (Gen. 2:15).

### Avad and Shamar: To Cultivate and to Tend or Guard.

Man's job is to garden, to cultivate, and keep the garden so that he and others can flourish in the garden. Gardening is the paradigm for work.

The first part of the definition: Work is cultivating the raw materials of a particular domain for the flourishing of others.

All workers are like gardeners; we work with a set plot of raw material that we cultivate for the benefit of others. You can use this definition to make sense of all types of work. What do you do? You're cultivating raw material for the flourishing of others.

Sometimes it takes a difficult economy or difficult circumstances to remind us that work isn't mostly about money; it's using our particular domain to serve others. Years ago, reflecting on WWII, Dorothy Sayers wrote this about work: "The habit of thinking about work as something one does to make money and to get a position in society is so ingrained in us that we can scarcely imagine what a revolutionary change it would be to think otherwise. So often people become doctors not primarily to relieve suffering, but because they want to bring themselves and their families up in the world. People become lawyers not because they have a passion for justice, but just to bring themselves and their families up in the world. During World War II, one of the great surprises that many had in the army was they found themselves for the very first time in their lives happy. Why? For the first time in their lives they found themselves doing something not for the pay, because it was miserable, and not for the social standing, because everyone was thrown in together, but for the sake of getting something done that needed doing...Work is the gracious expression of creative energy in the service of others."

"Work is the gracious expression of creative energy in the service of others." Gardening! Work is cultivating the raw materials of a particular domain for the flourishing of others—the service of others. God called the first man to **work** and to **keep**. Throughout the Bible this word **work** or *avad* is also translated as "to serve." To understand our work we must understand the master-servant relationship.

The second part of our definition of work: Work is faithfully serving where the master has put you and promised to resource you.

Genesis 2:7 says that God formed the man in the land. Then, Genesis 2:15 says God *"took the man and put him in the garden of Eden."* God took the man and put the man where he wanted the man. This word **put** means "to settle." God settled Adam where he wanted him.

Please hear me right now as we talk about your work! God is the Master in this relationship. God, the Master, put Adam, the Servant, in the garden and told his Servant his will: that he work and keep the garden. It is the Master's responsibility to give the Servant everything he needs to do his will. The Servant's only responsibility is to be faithful and obedient. He does not have to provide for himself, that is his Master's responsibility. He does not have to anticipate the future, that is his Master's responsibility. All he has to do is be faithful and obedient in the present, and to trust his Master for everything else.

Adam was called to garden, but it was God who created the garden. It was God who took Adam from where he was and put him in the garden. It was God who sent the sunshine and sent the rain to the garden. Adam the Servant wasn't responsible to do his Master's work; he wasn't designed to carry that load.

What garden has God put you in right now? Most of our stress boils down to a misunderstanding of responsibility. God doesn't expect you to do his job. You are the Servant, God is the Master. Don't carry a burden you were not meant to carry. God doesn't hold you responsible to be anybody but you. It's not your role to strive after the gifts that others have, but to be faithful with the gifts God has given you. Accept and revel in who God has made you to be and how he's equipped you. God doesn't expect you to create the work. Ephesians 2:10 says, *"...we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

What is work? This is a definition that you can use for the rest of your life—Work is gardening! Cultivating the raw materials of a particular domain for the flourishing of others. Faithfully serving where the master has put you and promised to resource you.

Now, I need to also say this: beware of the thorns. We're in Genesis 2, but Genesis 3 is coming. We live on the other side of The Fall. Ever since sin entered the world, work has thorns. Have you ever felt a thorn? It stings and it makes you bleed.

Now, when we work, thorns and weeds show up in the garden, making it difficult to do our work. So, beware of two errors in your approach to work: The All Roses vs. the All Thorns view.

### The Rosy View of the Garden

Work can be a utopia; you're always chasing the perfect job. I hear from a lot of our 20s group. They dream of complete job satisfaction; an end to world hunger in 1 year; a cappuccino machine; to work with best friends with no conflict; to leave work early every afternoon to surf or golf; their profit margins always

climbing; once a month you speak at charity functions and shake people's hands. You don't want a job! Jobs are hard. Jobs have thorns. If this is your view, you'll tend to overwork.

### The Thorny View of the Garden

All you see is thorns. All work is a curse. You live for when the clock strikes 5 pm; you spend all day on Facebook where you can escape the thorns of work; you live for the weekends when real life happens. Sometimes we do have to have a job that just pays the bills, but even then we can see more than thorns. If this is your view, you'll tend to underwork.

We must see the garden for what it is. Work is full of roses, but this side of The Fall we also have to deal with thorns.

### The Rest of Work

The culture of the Bay Area is not built upon the vision of the Bible. The vision of Genesis is that work, worship, food, friends, marriage, and rest are all enjoyed in harmony with the work-week. The Bay Area makes work and success the ultimate and destroys the biblical harmony.

The religion of the Bay Area is this: you've got to work to build your identity; you've got to work to earn rest. Work hard, and **then** maybe you'll be somebody. Work 60-70 hour work weeks for a year, **then** we'll give you five days of vacation, but you'll have to bring your laptop with you.

Genesis gives us a different message. Before the Bible talks about work, it talks about rest. "*And 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. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation*" (Gen. 2:2-3).

God does four things on the 7th day: He finished, he rested, he blessed, he made holy. The 7th day was a busy day. Unlike the other six days of creation which had an evening and a morning and then moved on to the next day, on the 7th day the text doesn't mention an evening and morning—the 7th day is still going, God is still at rest. Our working God is also a resting God and he calls us to join him and enter his rest.

God doesn't call us to earn rest, he gives us rest. Why can't you rest? I'm not talking about taking a day off. The Sabbath was the day where the people of Israel took a day off in order to remember their true identity.

Why can't you rest? I'm not talking about resting from your job. Why can't you rest from that deep restlessness that's always driving you? The singer Madonna said in a *Vogue* magazine interview: "I have an iron will and all of my will has always been devoted to conquering some horrible feelings of inadequacy. I'm always struggling with that fear. I push past one spell of it and discover myself as a special human being of worth and then I get to another stage and I think I'm mediocre and uninteresting

and worthless and I have to find a way to get myself out of that again and again. My drive in life is from this horrible feeling of being inadequate and mediocre and it is always pushing me, and pushing me and pushing me. Because even though I have become somebody, I still have to prove that I am SOMEBODY. My struggle has never ended and it probably never will."

This is why you can't rest! What do you want to be when you grow up? You want to be somebody! Like Madonna, you think you have to prove that you are somebody. Look underneath all the work you do. This restless insecurity about who you are is what drives you to strive so hard and never truly rest.

The Bible has good news for Madonna and good news for us. The Bible tells you that you are somebody. Before the Bible ever tells you to work, it tells you that you are created in the image of God. Genesis 1 comes before Genesis 2. The Bible gives you an identity before it gives you a job. You are a person created in the image of God. But, that image was damaged at The Fall. And ever since our sin against God, we've been a restless people trying to prove ourselves through our work.

There are two places in the Bible where God says he **finished** his work. In Genesis 2, God **finishes** his work of creation and then rests. Many years later, God sent Jesus into our restless world. Throughout his ministry Jesus made it clear that he was a faithful servant doing his Father's will. He did the work that the Father gave him to do. The Father prepared all the work. Jesus' role was to be a faithful and obedient servant, to succeed where Adam and Israel had failed.

God didn't put Jesus in the garden of Eden, God put him in the garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus sweat blood as he thought about the work he was sent to do. Then Jesus went to the cross to bleed for your sins, to bleed for your insecurity, to bleed for your identity, to bleed for your work and your rest. And then, for a second time, a voice cried out "It is finished!"

You will not find rest and you will not be able to work in freedom until you see Jesus on the cross saying to you, "it is finished!" This deep work of the gospel—you must give it access to your deepest insecurity and your deepest fear, and then you'll begin to discover a rest that you never dreamed possible. I can say this because I'm discovering this and preaching this to myself!

### 3 Practical Ways to Get Traction

#### Wax On; Wax Off

God is like Mr. Miyagi from the movie, *The Karate Kid*. God is Mr. Miyagi, you're Daniel-san. God is the Master, you're the servant. Be faithful where God has put you. You have no idea how what the Master has you doing right now will translate later on.

A lot of us are waiting right now. Waiting is **not** an interruption of God's plan for your life. If you're out of work and waiting, God is not surprised by this. He is using the waiting to shape you.

He did this to me during my time as a busboy, furniture mover, student, waiter, looking for work; all these things prepared me for what I'm doing now.

Bernard Bell said: "We so easily think it all depends upon us. We take matters into our own hands. We try to make things happen, doing so in our own strength, according to our own natural abilities. ...We doubt that God is at work ordering and providing. Or we think that he has not yet ordered and provided, that he has not yet put us in an arena in which we can serve him; the grass is greener elsewhere and it's time to move on; if only we can get somewhere else then we can serve him more fully. But the truth is that God knows exactly what he's doing in placing us. If we are being faithful to him we can be sure that he will put us exactly where he wants us to be and that he will order and provide for our lives. Our responsibility is not to second-guess him but just to be faithful and obedient where we are, doing what he has given us to do, walking into the opportunities that he creates for us, using the spiritual gifts he has given us, and enjoying the provision he makes for us."

### Consider your calling

We need to trust God where he's put us, and we should think about calling. We make this much more difficult than it needs to be. The three simple pieces to a calling are:

Inward Call: What do you want to do? (Affinity)

Outward Call: What do your friends think you should do? (Ability)

Casting Call: What open doors are there? (Opportunity)

All three pieces need to line up. If you think you're good at baking, have been accepted to baking school, but your friends won't eat what you bake... it's not your time right now. If you want to get your MBA, your friends think you'd do great in the business world, but there are no funds for tuition...it's not your time right now.

### Keep a weekly Sabbath

The first thing God sanctifies is time, not space. Three years ago my wife and I decided to observe a Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. At first I was depressed, but now God has set a rhythm of rest to my whole approach to work.

Take one day a week to completely rest from your work because this will change you. Don't believe the lie that you can only rest

once all your work is done. There's always more work to do! You will die with unfinished work. Rest as if all your work were done. It takes a lot of faith to rest. You have to hear Jesus saying to you "It is finished" in order to really rest.

### Conclusion

What do you want to be when you grow up? When I was a boy, I wanted to grow up and be like Eric Liddell. My favorite movie was and is *Chariots of Fire*. It's the story of two men who run fast, who work hard, for two very different reasons.

Harold Abrams works and works and trains in order to become somebody, in order to prove himself. In one of the most stunning lines in the film he says: "I will raise my eyes and look down that corridor; 4 feet wide, with 10 lonely seconds to justify my whole existence. But **will I?**"

Eric Liddell works and trains and runs for a very different reason. He doesn't have anything to prove. Eric Liddell knows **who** he is and he knows **whose** he is, and that frees him to run fast and work hard. He says: "I believe that God made me for a purpose. But He also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure... To win is to honor Him." Eric Liddell's ambition to run fast, to work hard, came from a deep rest in Jesus.

Eric Liddell's favorite hymn was *Be Still My Soul*. After breaking the world record and winning the 400 meters in the 1924 Olympics, Eric went on to be a missionary in China. And 20 years later as Eric was dying of a brain tumor in a Chinese prison camp, he taught his favorite hymn to those around him. Here's the first few lines. Let this be your song for your work:

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In every change, He faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future, as He has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

© 2009 Central Peninsula Church, Foster City, CA  
Catalog No. 1342-10FC