

Take This Job And . . .

On Sunday, we talked about how to find more meaning in our work.

1. Warm up question: What was the first real job you ever had as a teenager or young adult?
2. If you start work in your early 20s and continue until your 65, over the course of a lifetime you will log at least 86,000 hours of work. Nothing else we do in life during our waking hours comes anywhere close – not even nose picking. ☺
 - a. What thoughts or feelings does that 86,000 number evoke in you?
 - b. As you walk into work most days, what one word best describes how you typically feel? (Tell us why you chose that word.)
 - c. Read Genesis 3:13-19. From the perspective of these verses, work is a curse. Does it feel that way to you? Why or why not?
3. In traditional Christian theology, we are “fallen” humans living with the consequences of our sin, including the curse of work. But traditional theology also teaches that Jesus came to reverse the fall. And, remember, work was part of Adam and Eve’s life before the fall, as they tended to the Garden of Eden. So work doesn’t have to be a curse. Jeff suggested that the process of redeeming our work from the “curse” begins with “the doctrine of vocation.” The word “vocation” comes from a Latin root that means “calling.”
 - a. In the Middle Ages, the idea of “work as calling” was reserved for those who worked directly for the church – priests, monks, and nuns. Those who worked for the church were encouraged to see their work as “ministry,” most others were not. Many of us still carry that outdated viewpoint with us today. Have you ever thought of your job as “ministry”? Why or why not?
 - b. In I Peter 2:9, speaking to ordinary believers, Peter says, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of the One who has called you from darkness to light.” Revelation 1:6 makes the same point, saying, “[Jesus has] made us into a kingdom of priests serving God.” In your understanding, what does it mean to be a priest – what do priests do? And therefore, what does it mean to say that each of us is a priest?
 - c. C.S. Lewis said, “God seems to do nothing directly which can possibly be delegated to us creatures. God commands us to do slowly and blunderingly what God could do perfectly in the twinkling of an eye. Creation seems to be delegation through and through. I suppose this is because God is a giver.” What might be some reasons why God prefers to delegate as much as possible?

4. Thoughts like the foregoing led Reformation theologians to develop the “doctrine of vocation.” The basic idea is that, as priests, each one of us has been put here on earth to fulfill a sacred calling/vocation. But that leaves most of us wondering, “What is my calling? Am I doing what I’m supposed to occupationally?” Many early Christians faced the same dilemma. Especially those who were slaves felt trapped in menial work. To them, Paul gave the following advice:

I Corinthians 7:20-24. “You should continue on as you were when God first called you. Are you a slave? Don’t let that worry you – if you get a chance to be free, take it. . . . Otherwise, dear brothers and sisters, whatever situation you were in when you became a believer, stay there in your new relationship with God.”

I Corinthians 7:17. “Let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you.”

- a. What meaning or insight do you draw from these verses?
 - b. Jeff said, “You may not even realize it, but the job in which you find yourself was probably assigned to you by God as the place to which God has called you, at least for this moment in time.” Do you buy that? Why or why not?
5. Every morning as the sun rises, billions of people lift their prayers to God for their daily needs. Jeff asked each of us to imagine God turning to us and saying, “Ok, you’re on my team. You heard the prayers. I’m busy, so I’m sending you. Let’s get out there and meet those needs. Let’s make this world work.” Viewed this way, every legitimate job – no matter how obscure it may seem – supports an overall life-giving purpose. For example, a clerk in the back office of an auto repair shop is a “minister of transportation,” since he/she is performing a function necessary to keep us moving and able to get to all the places we need to be to serve people and sustain life. We couldn’t do that without all the ministers of transportation who serve us.
- a. Let’s go around the circle and ask each person to tell us what kind of minister you are – or, if retired, what kind of minister you were. Think about the line of work your company is in, and how that helps people. Then, each person should begin by saying, “I’m a minister of _____.” (If you can’t figure out what to say, ask the group to help.) Then go on to tell us how your job directly or indirectly meets important needs.
 - b. Do you believe your job is as important in God’s eyes as that of a surgeon or a pastor? Why or why not?
 - c. Paul does tell slaves, “If you get a chance to be free, take it.” In other words, if an opportunity presents itself to do work that feels even more meaningful, we should seize it. Do you feel you’re where you’re called to be for the foreseeable future, or are you feeling called to make a change?