

# **LIFE AT WORK**

**7pm**

## 2 | LIFE AT WORK

# CONTENTS:

<b>1: In the Beginning God Created... Work</b>	Page 3
<b>2: Thorns and Thistles</b>	Page 6
<b>3: God at Work While You're at Work</b>	Page 9
<b>4: Getting out of Bed on Monday Morning</b>	Page 13
<b>5: Who Took my Stapler?!</b>	Page 17
<b>6: Workplace Missionaries</b>	Page 21

# 1 In the beginning, God created... work!

## Why do we work?

On average people spend one third of their life-time sleeping and one third at work. Not voluntarily, many of us might add. We often can't wait for each working day to finish, for our holidays to arrive, and many of us have been dreaming of retirement since our twenties!

What is the point of spending so much time at work when life is so short? Why do we work? Should we work? What is the Bible's view on work?

### (A) Discussion starter questions (in table groups)

Discuss **some** of the questions below, or others you think will get people thinking:

- How do you picture your personal paradise world? Would you want work to be there? Why/ Why not?
- If you won \$1million, what would you do? Would you stop working? Why?
- What is work? How would you define it? What activities does/doesn't it include?
- Why do people work? Make a list of reasons why people say they work.
- Why do you work? What motivates you to work?
- From what you know already, what do you think the Bible says about work?

### (B) What does the Bible say? (split into small groups)

1. Read Genesis 1:1-2:3. What do we learn about God as "worker" in this chapter?
  
2. When God created humans, he made them in his image. In the context of Genesis 1:26, what do you think this means? What does this tell us about work?

## 4 | LIFE AT WORK

3. What kind of work does God give humanity to do (1:26-28, 2:15)? How does this compare to God's own work? (look at the example of Genesis 1:5,8,10 and Genesis 2:19)

*A helpful note here is to see the pattern of God creating and then filling spaces, with order and care. The mandate for humanity is to fill spaces, and the image of subduing it carries a sense of order and care (not oppression or a lack of care).*

*A note here is to point out the contrast to common perspectives of work (both ancient and modern) that work is a necessary evil, something that only has value as a means to an end. This portrayal of work as a privilege of our created nature challenges this. Humanity is given 'an office', a privilege and responsibility under God in the created order. The image of stewardship helps us view our work through a different lens.*

4. We also see that God rested. This forms the basis of his command to us to rest too (Ex 20:8-11). The image is not of God 'recharging his batteries' but enjoying his good creation. How does this shape our understanding of rest and its relationship to work?
5. Read Ecclesiastes 5:18-20. What does this add to how we should approach work?

## (C) Thinking It Through

Discuss **some** of the following questions, or others you think will help wrap up an apply what we've learnt.

6. How do you feel about work being good, being part of God's perfect plan for his world?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. How has your view of work been challenged?
  - a) When you are thinking that work is some kind of punishment.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b) When you are tempted to worship work and spend all your time at work.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Picture what it was like for Adam and Eve to work in a perfect world. In your job, are there ever moments when work is really satisfying and enjoyable? What are they?

• **Optional Application** (strongly encouraged for 7Up groups)

In pairs or triplets, share of 2 people at work that you'd like to love well. Loving them in the way you interact with them and getting to know them. Loving them in seeking to share the gospel with them in appropriate ways.

Write this down, keep a reflective journal for the next 6 weeks of how this goes. Meet in the same pair/triplet to review this each week.

## Pray It Through

*Pray that you'd be able to approach work in light of God's word*

## 2 Thorns and Thistles

### Why is work such a pain?

In Study 1, we saw that work is good, that it is part of God’s plan for his perfect world. We have learned that God, the worker, made humans in his image to be workers, too, and to share in his work of ruling over his creation. Work therefore is a real privilege.

But sadly, a lot of the time, that’s not how we experience work at all... Why is it that work often is such a pain?

#### **(A) Discussion starter questions (in table groups)**

- Which aspects of your job do you find frustrating?
- What do you think lies behind these frustrations of work?
- Do you think there is such a thing as the “perfect” job? Are you looking / hoping for the “perfect” job?

#### **(B) What does the Bible say? (split into small groups)**

When God made the world, it was perfect. So was work in the garden of Eden. But sadly, Genesis 3 has brought the great turning point. Rather than believing God’s word and trusting in God’s goodness, Adam and Eve disbelieved and disobeyed God. Rebelling against God had huge consequences. Most importantly, man’s relationship with God was wrecked. However, also many other aspects of life, including work, were affected... Read Genesis 3:6-22.

1. Did God sack Adam and Eve from their jobs? How does their rebellion against God affect the character of work itself?

2. How does sin affect human relationships? How would this affect work?





## 3 God At Work While You're At Work

### What is God working on today?

The Bible is clear that God is not simply a “watchmaker” who stopped working after he created the world and now is merely sitting back and observing how things tick-on in his world. No, God is still very much at work today. Day by day, he creates new life and he actively sustains his creation. But he is also doing a far greater work than that.

This study explores the theme of God’s grace as it shapes us at work. What is on God’s work agenda? What are his plans for the future? What is he working towards? And what does this mean for our plans and ambitions?

#### (A) Discussion starter questions (split into small groups)

- What are your aims in life / in your job? Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years time? What are you working towards? Why?
- What are most of your prayers about?
- As you hop on the tube or bus each morning to go into work what are your concerns for the day? What do you think / pray about as you go to work each morning?
- What do you see / think /feel when you look around your colleagues in your office? What do think each of them wants the most? What do you want the most for each of them?

#### (B) What does the Bible say?

*Read Psalm 104*

This is a psalm of praise for God and recounts his works in the past and the present.

1. How does it describe God presently at work? How does it describe the activity of the Spirit?

## 10 | LIFE AT WORK

*Read Isaiah 28:23-29*

This comes at the end of chastising the people of Israel for their arrogance that they can rule their own lives without regard for God.

2. How does this passage challenge their perspective? What does it teach us about God's grace in the common things of life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How does the perspective of these two passages shape our understanding of God's ongoing work and the relationship of our work to it?

*Read John 5:1-30.*

4. Why are the Jews opposing Jesus? And how does Jesus answer their accusation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What is the relationship between the work God is doing and the work Jesus is doing? How can we know what God's work is? (v19-20)

6. What is the work that Jesus is doing? How does Jesus describe the state of a person apart from him?

*Don't overlook the fact that this conversation is in the context of Jesus' miracle of healing. He has physically healed the man, and challenges him with the need for spiritual healing (v14). As he offers life he remains concerned for the physical needs of life, but his divine perspective extends beyond the grave to eternal life.*

In John 6 we read of another miracle addressing physical need – feeding the 5000. He again demonstrates his compassion for their physical need. Read John 6:14-29 to see the aftermath of this.

7. What is Jesus not interested in? (v14-15)

8. What does he recognize as the people's underlying motivation? (v26)

9. What is the greater need he teaches them of, and the solution to that need? (v27-29)

### **(C) Thinking It Through**

10. How does God's working agenda compare with / challenge your own aims and ambitions in life?



## 4 Getting Out Of Bed On Monday Morning

### How should we approach work?

So far in our studies we have seen that work is good. In fact, work is a real privilege because it reflects the fact that God made us in his image, to share in his rule over his world. However, human rebellion against God has spoiled work and so for a big part, work has become hard, frustrating and far from being satisfying.

Nevertheless, God still wants us to go to work on Monday mornings, and how we approach work and do our jobs is hugely important to him...

#### (A) Discussion starter questions (in table groups)

- What do job advertisements promise/offer people these days? What do you look for/ hope for in a job?
- How did you choose your current job? Do you think some jobs / careers are more worth pursuing than others?
- What is your approach to your work? Read and think through the following statements. Which of these apply to you? What do you make of them?

*“I really enjoy the days when my boss is away, because there is less pressure and I can work less hard.”*

*“Some tasks I enjoy less and so I put less effort into them / procrastinate doing them / don’t do them.”*

*“I think it is fine to take time during work hours to chat to my colleagues, have coffee or surf the web. Everybody does it.”*

*“I don’t put as much energy into my work as I could, because nobody else does and my boss doesn’t seem to reward the extra effort anyway.”*

*“I often try to work extra hard in order to impress my boss and get closer to that promotion.”*

*“I think it is important to be willing to stay back after work / work long hours to show commitment and dedication to the job.”*

## (B) What does the Bible say?

*Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, 1 Timothy 5:8, Ephesians 4:28, and 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.*

### 1. What reasons does the Bible give for why we should work?

*2 Thess 3:6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.*

*1 Tim 5:8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

*Eph 4:28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

*1 Thess 4:11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

*Read through Matthew 5:13-16, Colossians 3:22-24, Ephesians 6:7-8, Titus 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 4:7-11.*

2. How does God want us to conduct ourselves at work? Why? What is the main reason?

*Matt. 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. 14“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

*Col 3:22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. 4:1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

*Eph 6:7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.*

*Tit 2:9 Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, 10 and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.*

*Pet. 4:7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

## 16 | LIFE AT WORK

### (C) Thinking It Through

3. In what ways Bible's reasons for going to work similar to the worlds? How are they different? What do you make of the reasons given in the Bible?
  
4. Have you ever thanked God that he has given you work to keep you from being a burden to anyone, to keep you from being a busybody, to enable you to provide for your family and those in need?
  
5. Do you think God concerned about which particular job you do? Are you able to achieve the Bible's goals of work in your job?
  
6. How does working for Jesus rather than your boss challenge the way you do your work?
  
7. Re-read the statements from the beginning of this study. Has your view on these been challenged? If so, how?
  
8. What does it mean to work whole-heartedly? Does this mean you should work endless hours and not take your holidays?
  
9. Where are the limits in your obedience to your office boss? Are there any areas in your job, where obeying God means disobeying your boss?

### Pray It Through

## 5 Who Took My Stapler?!

### How should we relate to colleagues at work?

In the last study, we have seen that God is hugely concerned with how we approach work (much more so than with what kind of job we do). He wants us to work whole- heartedly, not in order to impress our office bosses and to get to that promotion, but rather, because Jesus is our real boss.

However, doing our jobs well is one thing, but dealing with that annoying colleague who yet again has failed to return the stapler, is quite another... What does God say about how we should relate to our colleagues at work?

### (A) Discussion starter questions (split into small groups)

1. Many workers testify that at times they've come close to punching a colleague at work. Have you ever been tempted? What annoys you most about your colleagues / your boss / the people who work for you?
  
2. Look at the statements below. Which of these do you find most difficult to do at work? Why?
  - not complaining about my boss
  - not moaning about some of my colleagues
  - not joining in on office gossip
  - respecting my boss
  - being patient with some of my colleagues who annoy me
  - saying thank-you and encouraging the people who work for me
  - being fair when the people who work for me don't fulfil my expectations
  - apologising to my colleagues for losing my temper
  - not being envious of the success/salaries of some my colleagues
  - owning up when I've made a mistake
  - being honest

## 18 | LIFE AT WORK

3. Do you think your colleagues would be able to guess that you are a Christian, by looking at the way you treat the people in the office? Are you concerned about them being able to guess?

### (B) What does the Bible say?

#### How to treat the boss

*Read 1 Timothy 6:1, 1 Peter 2:18 and Titus 2:9.*

4. What do these passages say about how to treat / not treat the boss? Why should we behave like this? What about masters who are harsh? Why should we still respect them?

*1 Tim 6:1 All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.*

*1 Peter 2:18 Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

*Tit 2:9 Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, 10 and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.*

## **How to treat your employees**

*Read Colossians 4:1 and Ephesians 6:9.*

5. How are we to treat the people who work for us? Why?

*Col 4:1 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

*Eph 6:9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.*

## **How to treat your colleagues**

*Read Colossians 3:5-14.*

6. How should we behave towards our colleagues? What does a Christian wear/ not wear to work?

## **(C) Thinking It Through**

7. How would life in your office be different if people treated each other in the way the Bible calls us to?

8. What would it look like practically for you to respect your boss? Are there any areas where your attitude / behaviour towards your boss needs to change?

## 20 | LIFE AT WORK

9. What would it look practically for you to do right by your employees? Are there any areas where your attitude / behaviour towards your employees needs to change?
10. Think about the behaviours listed in Colossians 3. Which of the negatives do you find most difficult to avoid? Which of the positives do you find most difficult to do?
11. How does the reminder of what Jesus has done for you help you in your attitude / behaviour towards your colleagues?

**Pray It Through**



## **22 | LIFE AT WORK**

3. How does this apply in the workplace (2:18-21) and the home (3:1-7)
  
4. How are we to respond to hostility?
  
5. How does the call to abstain from sinful desires in 2:11 apply in your workplace?
  
6. What evangelistic strategy does he commend in 3:15-16?

### **(C) Thinking It Through**

7. How does loving God with all our heart, soul mind and strength shape us as workplace missionaries?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does loving our neighbor as ourselves shape us as workplace missionaries?

9. What have been some of the key things that you've learnt during this series of studies? What has surprised/confronted/confused/challenged/encouraged you?

10. What one key area of Life at Work would you like to grow in over the coming weeks and months?

**Pray It Through**



**87 North Terrace Adelaide SA 5000**  
**8213 7300**  
**office@trinitycity.org.au**  
**www.trinitycity.org.au**