

WHAT IS GOOD WORK?



Read Genesis 1:26-2:3

- What is the relationship between what God does in Genesis 1 and what God commands people to do?
- How does God supply their needs in this passage?
- God provides the plants, animals (food), and other materials they need to care for creation.
- What does God's rest in this passage tell us about work?

When we think of work, we often think of toil and stress. But this passage in Genesis makes it clear that work is a gift from God. Good work is also how we follow in the Lord's footsteps. Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (Gen. 1:26)

There are two key ideas in the motif of "image of God:"

- **Royal representatives of God** – the idea of "image bearer" in the Ancient Near East is the idea of a royal emissary who carries the king's seal. If a person entered a city carrying the king's seal with a picture of the king's head on it, they knew this person came in the king's place. If we are God's image bearers, we are to rule in God's stead. Thus, we are to rule as God rules, which means we are to work towards the flourishing of creation the way God would. This is known as **the cultural mandate**.
- **Imitators of God** – because we are made in God's image, God in his goodness has given us capacities that in some way are like his. That is, we can imitate God by using who he's made us to be and the gifts and skills he's given to us to serve the flourishing of creation.

Here are some different types of work that God does, and that different jobs imitate, from Robert J. Banks, *Faith Goes to Work*:

- Redemptive work – work that pushes back on the brokenness of sin
- Creative work – architects, writers, artists, software engineers, homemakers
- Providential work – work that maintains the orderly running of things – janitors, gardeners, mechanics, civil servants
- Justice work – work that does what it can to ensure a just society
- Compassionate work – work that focuses on caring for others
- Revelatory work – work that reveals truth



Go and do

As you reflect on the work you are doing (in many areas of life), answer the questions below.

- Pick a job (something you're doing now or that you want to do in the future). Reflect on how the job serves the flourishing of all creation.
- Here's a list of jobs. How could these jobs imitate God?
 - Stocking shelves at a grocery store
 - Custodian in a campus dormitory
 - Nurse in an emergency room
 - Graphic designer for a non-profit
 - Secretary in a government office
- Homework for the week: Think of someone who is further along in the same major or career as you (and is a believer). Have a conversation with them about how they see their job serve the flourishing of creation. Do they see things in their job that are broken?



Reflect on what you learned

- What did you learn from your conversation with someone about their work?
- What did God speak to you about how this work could serve the flourishing of creation? What did God show you about brokenness in this work?
- As you worked this last week, how could you see God using your work for the flourishing to all of creation?
- Vision cast for what's next: Check out a Discipleship Cycle on _____.