

# Vocation as Worship

*Worship starts at 8am Monday not Sunday.  
Sunday is not the only or main day we worship.*

Lightbulb Moments of Reflection - The Four Main false-narratives I believed in college that made me not pursue learning in a Business Major.

The Key Question: What did I falsely believe about business that made me run from studying business as a major?

1. **Pursuing business studies was a veiled attempt at hiding your real greed.** I wanted to do something worthwhile and not be around greed all day. I had only one category of work outside the church - it is to be done with selfishness. The truth is that work is good. It is designed by God before the fall even to be good. It was his idea. Even after the fall work is good and the gospel even is transforming that. Greed is real and a real temptation but that does not negate the original design and essence of work being a tool for good. Wayne Grudem in his book Business for the Glory of God had a profound impact on me 20 years ago. The premise and opening of the book affirms this: work is not evil nor is it even neutral, but work is designed by God for good and his glory.
2. **Riches from business were only good when given in large portions to the church work:** The only moral reason or purpose of profits were to fund ministry. I did not think anyone pursued business with a good conscience but if they ended up in business then it was only “good” work if they gave the bulk of their money to the church. It was a “necessary-evil” argument. I now see that there are many benefits as to WHY work and what makes work fundamentally good is not having a Bible study there weekly or sharing your faith [though these certainly can be good] but that fundamentally work is ordained and blessed by God.
3. **People in business were in second-tier work beneath full-time ministry and blue collar work was third-tier:** The jobs in business were for people who did not have the gifts of teaching God’s word effectively. What I have now come to see is that there are all kinds of work, in and outside the church, and whatever God calls you to and gifts you with to do is equal valued work before God, even though the world values it with different hourly amounts. God got his hand dirty in creation and worked.
4. **Net Worth (Equity on the balance sheet) is THE scorecard for those who played in this game, and I would never really win or beat others from Wheaton.** Now I see that net worth on the balance sheet has nothing to do with your value or worth as an image bearer of God. It IS a powerful tool by which we can do good and grow our business whether it is running your family’s bills and “home business” or a full fledged corporation. Net Equity on the balance sheet is how companies build. It is what is leveraged for more revenue opportunities. It is NOT a reflection of my value even though that is the broken way that most of the world looks at it. Therefore, work in business is not better because you beat others; it is good work because God built work to be good and all work has this intrinsic value before God.

Quotes and verses cited in Every Good Endeavor by Tim Keller that have helped expand my thinking from these four false-narratives:

- Work as mainly self-realization undermines society: “As we shall see, thinking of work mainly as a means of self-fulfillment and self-realization slowly crushes a person and—as Bellah and many others have pointed out—undermines society itself.” P19
- Luther and Calvin studied work: “The faith and work resurgence is like a stream with many headwaters. “When we work, we are, as those in the Lutheran tradition often put it, the “fingers

of God,” the agents of his providential love for others... Calvin: the ‘Reformed view, the purpose of work is to create a culture that honors God and enables people to thrive.’” P20-21

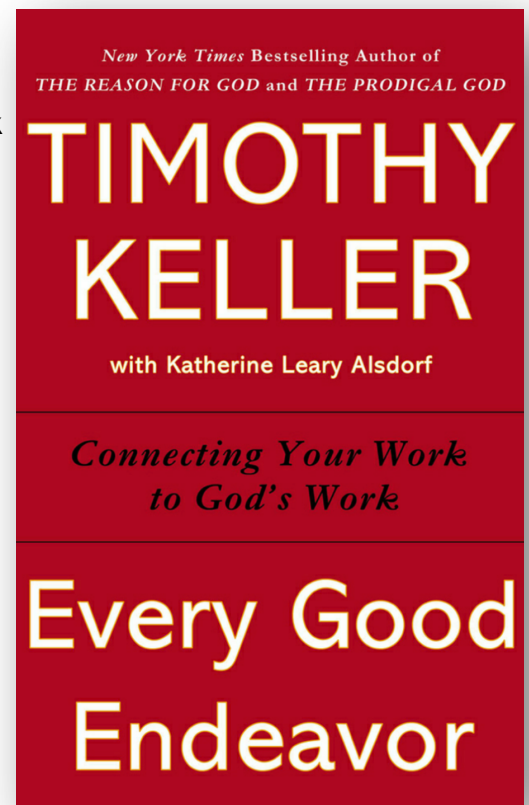
- Work is good and not a curse: God delighted to work in creation. As image bearers, he calls us to meaningful work in the same way. “There is no better starting point for a meaningful work life than a firm grasp of this balanced work and rest theology.” Genesis 1 - God works, he delights in work, he calls us to work, work is not a curse but is good. The 6:1 work ratio is exactly opposite of what the world prizes which is either 7:0 or 0:7; God calling us to work is an invitation to freedom. P39
- Four Reasons WHY work is Good:
  - God works: he gets his hands dirty, he worked for the sheer joy of it;
  - He make workers: we imitate him and commissions them to work with a 6:1 ratio work to rest.
  - Work is not a curse: it is the blessedness of the garden before the fall.
  - Work provides meaning: this penultimate meaning for life is important for understanding ourselves and in worship of God.
- “Luther writes: “God could easily give you grain and fruit without your plowing and planting, but he does not want to do so.” 68 And so we see what Luther means by God’s vocation. Not only are the most modest jobs—like plowing a field or digging a ditch—the “masks” through which God cares for us, but so are the most basic social roles and tasks, such as voting, participating in public institutions, and being a father or mother... “God milks the cows through the vocation of the milk maids.”
- Work as basic need: “Work is as much a basic human need as food, beauty, rest, friendship, prayer, and sexuality; it is not simply medicine but food for our soul. Without meaningful work we sense significant inner loss and emptiness. People who are cut off from work because of physical or other reasons quickly discover how much they need work to thrive emotionally, physically, and spiritually.”
- Work as your worship: “Also, work is also one of the ways we discover who we are, because it is through work that we come to understand our distinct abilities and gifts, a major component in our identities. So author Dorothy Sayers could write, “What is the Christian understanding of work? . . . [It] is that work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is, or it should be, the full expression of the worker’s faculties . . . the medium in which he offers himself to God.”
- Work is not a curse: “Nevertheless, it is meaningful that God himself rested after work (Genesis 2: 2). Many people make the mistake of thinking that work is a curse and that something else (leisure, family, or even “spiritual” pursuits) is the only way to find meaning in life.”
- Work does not provide ultimate meaning / life worthwhile: “Work is not all there is to life. You will not have a meaningful life without work, but you cannot say that your work is the meaning of your life. If you make any work the purpose of your life—even if that work is church ministry—you create an idol that rivals God.”

| Change from               | Change to   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Individual salvation   | The gospel changes everything (hearts, community, and world)  |
| 2. Being good             | Being saved   |
| 3. Cheap grace            | Costly grace (awareness of our sin)                           |
| 4. Heaven is “up there”   | Christ will come again—to this earth                          |
| 5. God is value-add to us | In God’s providence, we could contribute to his work on earth |
| 6. Idols of this world    | Living for God  |
| 7. Disdain of this world  | Engaged in this world   |
| 8. “Bowling alone”        | Accepting community   |
| 9. People matter          | Institutions matter   |
| 10. Christian superiority | God can work through whomever he wants (common grace)         |

- **Work Becomes Selfish:** The Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 shows that mankind wants to make a name for themselves apart from their identity with God. It becomes about making a name for ourselves beyond the name we have been given by God as his child. “One of the reasons work is both fruitless and pointless is the powerful inclination of the human heart to make work, and its attendant benefits, the main basis of one’s meaning and identity. When this happens, work is no longer a way to create and bring out the wonders of the created order, as Calvin would say, or to be an instrument of God’s providence, serving the basic needs of our neighbor, as Luther would say. Instead it becomes a way to distinguish myself from my neighbor, to show the world and prove to myself that I’m special.”

There is a way to have freedom from the “work under the work”

- “For many of us, being productive and doing becomes . . . an attempt at redemption. That is, through our work, we try to build our worth, security, and meaning.” 207
- Many people are trying to get a sense of self through productivity and success—but that burns them out. For others the motivation is to bring home a paycheck so they can enjoy “real life”—but that makes work into a pointless grind. These motivations are what we could call the “**work beneath the work.**” And they are what make work so physically and emotionally exhausting in the end.
- Luke 5:11 - Now they had an identity and significance untethered to their job or financial status. So they could walk away from it (if that was called for), or pick it up again, or approach it in a different way from before. They had a new freedom both from their work and in their work.
- We have a new rhythm of rest: “All of us are haunted by the work under the work—that need to prove and save ourselves, to gain a sense of worth and identity.” The sabbath celebrates our design. “Sabbath is therefore a declaration of our freedom. It means you are not a slave—not to your culture’s expectations, your family’s hopes, your medical school’s demands, not even to your own insecurities.”
- “When Jesus calls all people to himself, he says he knows we are “weary and burdened” and that we need “rest.” But Jesus’s cure for our weariness is a “burden” (verse 30) and even a “yoke” (verse 29)! The yoke or harness put on a beast of burden was a symbol of slavery and grinding toil. How could this be a solution to the problem of deep weariness? Jesus says that it is his yoke and burden—and it is the only one that is light. Why? “For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (verse 29). He is the only boss who will not drive you into the ground, the only audience that does not need your best performance in order to be satisfied with you. Why is this? Because his work for you is finished.”
- Remember, God was able to rest in Genesis 2, verses 1-3 only because his creative work was finished. And a Christian is able to rest only because God’s redemptive work is likewise finished in Christ. When the work under the work has been satisfied by the Son, all that’s left for us to do is to serve the work we’ve been given by the Father.
- Coltrane was once like everyone else. He had said deep in his heart, “If I get really good, if I’m successful, if people applaud and appreciate me, then I’ll know I’m significant; I’ll know my life is worth something.” Coltrane had stopped making music for his own sake. He did it for the music’s sake, the listener’s sake, and God’s sake.



- “You can accept gladly whatever level of success and accomplishment God gives you in your vocation, because he has called you to it. You can work with passion and rest, knowing that ultimately the deepest desires of your heart—including your specific aspirations for your earthly work—will be fulfilled when you reach your true country, the new heavens and new earth. So in any time and place you can work with joy, satisfaction, and no regrets. You, too, can say, “Nunc dimittis.”

### **Lightbulb Moments - The Four Main Items that STRUCK me as new/renewed from this Book:**

1. **God created progressively and calls us to build culture the same way:** God certainly had the power to create everything on one day - why didn't he? Why didn't he name the animals but call Adam to that work instead? He showed us how to multiply and build culture from the raw materials he made just like he did progressively each day of creation. That is our job description. We are culture-building 102 times over, leaders creating places for the team to thrive in and outside the bank.
2. **Fear culture doesn't just underperform but is wrong:** Paul makes a case in Ephesians 6 that bosses are to treat workers with dignity as equals not promoting fear. Holding someone accountable can be done but not in a belittling way as a tyrant. A culture including laughter where people look forward to work outperforms and is what the vocation of culture making is all about.
3. **We move from working “to get” to working from “overflow”:** “Since we already have in Christ the things other people work for—salvation, self-worth, a good conscience, and peace—now we may work simply to love God and our neighbors.” How do we seek salvation in our work? Or peace? Etc. How do we seek salvation in the Bible? Or peace? Where is it found?
4. **Our work lasts:** We work for the Lord in response to his calling and gifting for his glory. We are the “mask of God” to cause people to thrive. Our work is not in vain - Nigel's leaf really exists on the other side. God calls us to walk in specific good works for us to fulfill as his “poetry”.