

Christ in Work

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We're taking a look at Christ in all, what historic Christianity has to do with the city, culture and this week *work*. From housework to artwork and everything in between, most of our waking hours are devoted to some kind of work. Yet we often make too much or too little of work. How should we work? Why should we work? Why & How.

Why Do We Work?

We recently hosted a Faith & Work event with Katherine Leary-Alsdorf, founder of the Center for Faith & Work in Manhattan. She shared a story about doing some work for a church as a volunteer, and that they were all given \$25 Starbucks gift cards as payment. Since she taught, she was given \$50! What's wrong with this? She pointed out that the gift assumed her primary motivation was financial, that the chief motivation for work, even volunteer work, is economic. A little insulted. What does say about work that isn't paid? Housework, yardwork, art work, school work, volunteer work? If we're not working for pay, why work at all? In v. 22 we find this, "*Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.*" Paul puts Master and the slave on the same level instructing them both. He notes a couple motivations for work: eye-service and people-pleasing and ill add in another. **People pleasing**, working just to please your boss or peers, is a kind of dirty motivation in creative culture. People move to the city to do what they love—create music, design, launch a new business, degree at UT. We move here because we love the work, not other people! **David** was raised in the Chicago suburbs. He passed up a pharmaceutical marketing job to pursue what he loves—a writing career in an unpaid editing internship. He's not in it for just the money. They why? Because he is a self-described "**Yuccie.**" [Image] According to his Mashable article, the a young, urban creative who, "*has been indoctrinated with the transcendent power of education, and infected by the conviction that not only do we deserve to pursue our dreams; we should profit from them.*" After some success as a writer, he reflects on why he works: "*To wit, of all the reasons I enjoy being a writer, the single driving force behind my career trajectory has been validation. I write for validation: of my peers, of my parents, of the followers who retweet me, even of the commenters who say cruel things in my general direction beneath every piece I've ever published.*" Why does he write? Validation. Even the Yuccie is a people-pleaser. Why are you working? To uncover validation. How do you know? What happens when people criticize your work? If it levels you...you know why you're working. The next reason Paul gives, **eye-pleasing**. Contrary to the Yuccie, this person does *not* love their work. Their work is challenging and not a dream job. Because they haven't found "their passion" they are tempted to just get the job done, or to work well only when someone is looking. You don't like the company, so you cut corners. Work is a drag, so you complain. Eye-pleasing works in spite of the work. Happens easily in **parenting**. It's a thankless job. My kids have never come up to me and said, "Dad, you are doing a great job as a Father. I really appreciate how you discipline me and love me. I just want to affirm you." Parenting might not be your passion, and if passion is your motivation for your work, you'll you cut corners as a Mom or Dad. As mom, you envy childless adults. You'll fault the kids for your joylessness and look to a hobby, job, friendship, some other

work to fulfill you. Dad, instead of playing with kids you play on the phone. Parents, instead or patiently instructing, we snap and yell. Why because we're eye-pleasing. You parent well in public but behind closed doors we're a troll. Why? Eye-pleasers are perpetually dissatisfied, so they disengage from their work to find satisfaction outside the work. **Eye pleasing works in spite of the work, People pleasing works for validation, and work pleasing works for the work.** Work pleaser is obsessed with the work. It fills every conversation with the spouse or significant other. You're driven. Instead of not loving it enough, you love it too much. You find yourself dropping little hints on how awesome your work is, but rarely find interest in other's work. *Work has become a religious experience for you. In a secular society, devoid of deep, true meaning we often fill the longing for meaning with work.* Reflecting on his work as a poet, **Christian Wiman** said, "[The thing about poetry is that it can become an idolatry. It was for me for a number of years. I could only find meaning in poetry. I didn't really believe that there was any meaning anywhere else.](#)" Insert your passion. He describes how his work became an abyss. Then, when he was interviewing for a job something happened. He heard another poet say: "[eventually every single thing in you has to bow down.](#)" He meant that we can only find true meaning outside of our work, selves, not inside it. This is Paul's point: "[Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men](#)" (23). "[You are serving the Lord Christ](#)" (24). [not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord](#) (22). Here we have a motivation outside the work, greater than the work. The Lord Christ. **Wiman is saying is that we refuse to bow down to Christ because we're busy bowing down to something else.** Artists often say things like, "The church doesn't support my art." Which may be true, but what might be happening is that you are bowing down to your art. Or people say the church doesn't meet my needs. Bowing down to our perceived needs. Or we look at our work and we complain and spiral down because we haven't found our passion. Maybe you're bowing down to your passion. Maybe you're bowing down to your boss, your children. Everybody has to bow down. And when it's anything other than Christ, there's a limit to your meaning, satisfaction, validation. When we're not completely bowed down, we're worship the wrong thing. **We were never meant to bow down to our work but through our work.** Why should we work? Worship. A continuous bending and outpouring to something. Will you bend to Christ? Will you bend your work? Until you do, you'll be perpetually dissatisfied. We've thought about *why* we work, now *how* we work.

How We Work

There's a piece in *Atlantic Monthly* this week that criticizes Christian filmmaking as inferior, not because of its message but because of its shoddiness. The craft subordinated to the message. On the other hand, successful work is often criticized for its obsession with perfection. The product superior to the person, or to the message. Why is Christian work often shoddy? *Because we've made the message, not the Person, our object of worship. We become content with work branded for Christ while not bearing the glory of Christ. We fail to comprehend the God we worship.* Christians often worship just a redeemer (of sin). So the work is always subordinated to the message. But Jesus is more than a redeemer. More than a fixer. He is a creator...of beauty. Colossians is very strong on this point. All things are made in, through, and for Christ, held together by him. So it should come as no surprise when we read: "[Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men](#)" (23). Do

you see how Paul's comprehension of God, as Christ as Lord, as Redeemer/Creator, affects his view of work? Dignity. How should we work? *Heartily* as to the Lord. What does this mean? Two points here. If we worship a God who is both creator and redeemer, then we should work beautifully and compassionately. Beautifully. Johnny Ive, Sr. Vice president of design at Apple: "*Elegance in objects is everybody's right, and it shouldn't cost more than ugliness. So much of our manufactured environment testifies to carelessness.*" Beauty shouldn't cost? So he's dedicated his life to making elegant, beautiful tech. In fact, he doesn't settle for just beauty. "*I do think that one of the things that just compels us is that we have a sense that, in some way, by caring, we are actually serving humanity. People might think it's a stupid belief, but it's a goal—it's a contribution that we can hope we can make, in some small way, to culture.*" Did you notice what he's doing? How he's working? To serve humanity. Compassionately. It is not ultimately about the product but the person. Now we might quibble over some of this, but here we see beauty in the service of humanity. Work beautifully, hone your craft, make excellent films, products, papers, homes, but do it for humanity, with compassion, for the flourishing of society. Here's a secular person tapping into Christian truth without real justification. Ive just senses its true. Beautiful and compassionate work comes from a beautiful and compassionate Creator. Now looking at our text you might push back and say, doesn't he say work for the Lord not for men? Shouldn't we privilege redemption over creation? No, because Christ is both Creator & Redeemer. Don't give him half-worship. Give him whole worship. Christ in all of your life. Everything bowing down will benefit others. In fact, Christians have even more reason to work beautifully and compassionately, because we're not enslaved to the work. We're enslaved to the Lord Christ, Creator & Redeemer. Now you don't have to have Apple's budget to do this. I have a friend who started a roofing business, and he noticed the industry was pretty unethical and cutthroat. He wanted to reflect more of his faith in his work. He noticed that most of his competitors didn't pay the work crews a decent wage. He also noticed the roofs were guaranteed for long. He thought to himself, "I want these working class people to know they are worth more than their ability to swing a hammer." So, he decided to pay his crew a significantly higher wage. And he throws a big Christmas party for them every year, with bonuses. He also guarantees the work for much longer. Beauty and compassion. Creator/Redeemer. Worship through work. His business has done quite well, but its no guarantee. Profit can't be your ultimate motivation. Paul seems to anticipate this: "*Work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*" Most of these slaves didn't receive a cent, but they received a huge inheritance. Your work, your parenting, your art may never receive the validation or success you want, but do it for something greater. If you bend it to the Lord Christ, working beautifully and compassionately, you'll receive an inheritance in the city that is to come. If you are overlooked, underpaid, or mistreated, work for the Lord, knowing he will pay the wrongdoer back. Keep your eyes, not on the work, but on the Lord. Let everything bow down to him and you'll actually get more back through the validating love and work of Jesus, our Lord and our Christ.