

THEOLOGY OF WORK

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Theology of Work

Dr. Gerry Breshears

Session 1 – Overview

1. Every Member a Minister

2. Secular vs. Sacred?

3. Defining Work

The biblical doctrine of work is the gracious expression of creative energy of the Lord in the service of others to create shalom.

Dorothy Sayers via Tim Keller and Gerry Breshears

4. A look ahead

Lesson 2: Who God Is

Lesson 3: The Image of God

Lesson 4: Humanness

Lesson 5: Spiritual Gifts

Lesson 6: Vocation

Lesson 7: Salvation

Lesson 8: Work

Lesson 9: Justice

Lesson 10: Rest

Reflection Questions – Lesson 1

1. What elements of Gerry's definition of work are new to you? What do you see as the strengths of the definition? The problems or weaknesses?
2. How do you think your attitude toward your job would change if you saw it as a means of showing God's creativity, serving others, to help society flourish?

Lesson 2 – Who God Is: Pictures of God

1. The Relational God: God as Unity and Trinity, in Community

Genesis 1:26-27

2. The Self-Giving God

John 14-16

3. False Pictures of God

Pantheism
Deism
Polytheism
Semi-Deism

4. God as Co-worker

Genesis 2: 15-25

5. God as dying Messiah

Genesis 3:1-24

6. God as Covenant Partner

Isaiah 6:1-13

Reflection Questions – Lesson 2

1. Which picture of God that Gerry showed is most meaningful to you? Why?
2. Is the view of God as a relational, self-giving God a new concept for you? How might this view impact your spiritual life? The way you do ministry?

Lesson 3 – The Image of God

1. The meaning of ‘image’ – making something visible or present

Genesis 1:26-27
Daniel 3

2. Jesus as the image of God

Colossians 1:15
John 1:18

3. Humans as the image of image of God

Genesis 2:7
Genesis 1:26-28

4. The image of God after the fall

Genesis 9:3-6

5. Teleological aspect: The image is designed to grow

2 Corinthians 3:18

6. A definition of image of God: The amazing ability and awesome responsibility to make visible the invisible characteristics of our Creator and Redeemer.

7. Implications of the image of God

- a. Protecting life
- b. Attitudes in work

8. Review: Dimensions of the image of God

- a. Personal: self-awareness, moral decision-making
- b. Functional: working for and with God
- c. Relational: connecting to humans and God
- d. Teleological: growth and development

Reflection Questions – Lesson 3

1. What are some concrete ways you've seen others (or have you) made visible the invisible characteristics of God? What does it cost to do this?
2. Of the four dimensions of the image of God that Gerry listed (personal, functional, relational, teleological), which one is the most challenging for you to practice? What changes could you make to make progress in that area?

Reflection Questions – Lesson 4

1. Gerry states that it's important to know these 8 dimensions of yourself in order to know who you are as a person, in partnership with God, so you can work with satisfaction with Him and for Him. Which of these dimensions are most challenging for you to bring into balance in your work? Why?
2. Choose one (or more) of these dimensions; what suggestions do you have for others who may be struggling with this dimension?

Lesson 5 – Spiritual Gifts

1. Identifying spiritual gifts
 - a. 1 Corinthians 12
 - b. Romans 12
 - c. 1 Peter 4
 - d. Ephesians 4
2. The relationship between abilities and gifts
3. Finding your spiritual gift
4. The gift of prophecy
 - 1 Corinthians 14:1, 24

Spiritual Gifts – Position Paper

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A spiritual gift is any Spirit spirit-empowered ability that is used in any ministry of the church. As Jesus-Followers we must not be ignorant about our gifts but to use them to worship God, serve His people and fulfill our mission of making disciples of all nations (1 Cor. 12:1-11). Spiritual gifts are bestowed by God through the empowerment of His Spirit and must be exercised in love by following biblical principles and guidelines (1 Cor. 13-14). They are all connected to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:21-22). Everyone has at least one gift and most Jesus-Followers have several. No person has all the gifts and gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, not earned. While there are many different kinds of gifts ranging from quite supernatural (working of miracles) to quite natural (administration) all are Spirit empowered abilities and continue the mission of Jesus. The common differentiation between spiritual gifts and natural talents is usually over drawn. Some examples of spiritual gifts can be found in 1 Cor. 12:8-11, Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 4:9-11.

Definitions of Gifts Listed in 1 Cor. 12:8-11:

Word of wisdom: The Spirit empowered ability to take the principles of God's word and practically apply them to everyday life situations.

Word of knowledge: The Spirit empowered ability to research, remember and make effective use of information on a many different subjects.

Faith: The Spirit empowered ability to trust and act on God's revelation or character, especially when it empowers others to do the same. The gift of faith is an expectancy, conviction, certainty and assurance that God will act in an evident way to change circumstances or conditions in response to a need e.g. unusual finances, special provision, divine healing, needed breakthrough, divine protection, deliverance from demonic power, etc.

Healing: The Spirit empowered ability to reverse the destructive impact of sin through physical, emotional, or spiritual healing to bring both comfort and health to those who are suffering. It is a gift many Christian physicians and counselors exercise in the course of their working.

Miracles: The Spirit empowered ability to call upon God to do supernatural acts that reveal His power.

However that working may not be of the LORD, so we must test the gifts. Satan is a great counterfeiter. Matt. 24:24

- a. Does it promote Jesus as God in the flesh? 1 John 4:1-4
- b. Does it follow scriptural principles? Deut. 13:1-5
- c. Does it encourage submission or rebellion? 1 Pet. 4:10-11
- d. Does it edify? 1 Cor. 12:7
- e. Is it exercised lovingly? 1 Cor. 13

Prophecy: The Spirit empowered proclamation of the Word of God that presses deep into the hearts of people, enabling them to see their lives and circumstances in light of God's promises, priorities and purposes. The message may be directly from God or from Scripture. It is usually God's

perspective on present events or persons but may also predict the future. In any case, it is God's message proclaimed in the power of the Spirit.

We must test any revelation or prophecy (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 John 4:1):

- a. Are the speaker and the message loyal to the LORD? Deut. 13:1-11; 18:20
- b. Is it consistent with Scripture? Deut. 13:1-11; 1 Kings 13:15-18
- c. Is what they describe or predict accurate? Deut. 18:22
- d. Is their character Christ-like Jer. 23:9-40; Micah 3:5-10
- e. Does their word lead to up-building and encouragement? 1 Cor. 14:3
- f. Do the elders affirm their word? 1 Cor. 14:29

Distinguishing between spirits: The Spirit empowered ability to recognize whether people, events, or beliefs are from Satan or God, to distinguish truth from error.

Speaking in Tongues: The Spirit empowered ability to praise God or pray to God in languages unknown to the user. Tongues are spoken to God and prophecy is spoken to people (1 Cor. 14:2-3).

Interpreting Tongues: The Spirit empowered ability to interpret languages unknown to the user.

Some Common Questions:

When do we get gifts?

It could be any time, including birth, conversion, as we mature, or for special needs.

How many gifts are there?

The biblical gift lists contain approximately 20 different gifts. The scriptural lists are exemplary rather than extensive, so there are many gifts not specifically listed in Scripture. The variety in the gift lists gives indication of the diverse workings which the Spirit does in the people of God to continue the mission of Jesus.

Has the Spirit stopped giving some of the gifts?

They are all still active as the Spirit wills to give them. The Bible is complete and our only inerrant, trustworthy authority. Prophecy and revelation continue and must be tested carefully. It is not love or gifts, but love expressed in gifts.

How do you discover your gift?

Ask yourself "What am I good at?" "What am I passionate about?" "What do others confirm in me?" Remember that most gifts are not listed in Scripture so don't limit your search to those lists. Most spiritual gift inventories are misleading at best since they are built on a specific list of gifts.

When does a natural talent become a spiritual gift?

When ability is Spirit empowered and used for accomplishing the mission of the Jesus.

Are any gifts to be sought?

We can ask freely, but it is the Spirit who decides and distributes.

Are any gifts for all people?

Yes. In 1 Cor. 14:1 Paul exhorts all to prophesy that is to speak God's Word with transforming power.

What does Paul mean by "greater gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:5)?"

They are gifts that edify the church more and bring more benefit to others. That some gifts are greater does not mean others are unimportant or that those having greater gifts are better Christians.

What about speaking in tongues?

Tongues are for praising God and for prayer (1 Cor. 14). For instance, in Acts 2:11 the 120 disciples speak in tongues and declare the wonders of God. That is praise. Others hear the praise in their own languages and wonder what's going on, accusing them of being drunk. Peter explains this in his evangelistic Pentecost sermon. (Acts 2:14-21). Paul specifically says one who speaks in a tongue (language) speaks to God, not other people. (1 Cor. 14:2) Verse 16 says tongues are praising God. Verse 14 and 15 speak of praying in a tongue (language). Paul clearly thinks tongues are good: In verse 18, he says he speaks in tongues more than all of them. The abuse in Corinth was that they were claiming speaking in tongues as a mark of superior spirituality. They were indulging in uncontrolled public tongues thinking that flaunting their gift was a sign of God's blessing on them. Unbelievers who experienced the chaos saw it as a sign that they were out of their mind (1 Cor. 14:23). Paul's basic point about tongues in the gathering of the church is don't forbid it (1 Cor. 14:39) but to exercise the gift using biblical guidelines.

What are biblical guidelines for speaking in tongues in a church assembly?

1 Cor. 14:26-28, 39-40 establishes clear guidelines for speaking in tongues. Paul asserts that only two or three should speak and one at a time (v.27), there must be interpretation or the speaker should refrain from speaking out loud (v.28) and there must be control, not confusion (v.33, 40).

Reflection Questions – Lesson 5

1. Do you agree that the difference between abilities and spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit empowering that ability? How might this understanding change the way we teach and practice spiritual gifts?
2. Gerry defines prophecy as the Spirit-enabled ability to speak out the Word of God so that it penetrates deeply in the lives of people. Do you agree that all believers have this gift, or should seek it? What steps can the church be taking to help this process?

Lesson 6 – Calling/Vocation

1. Types of Calling:

- a. Called to be believers

Romans 1

- b. Called to be like Christ

2 Corinthians 2:14

2. Finding my Calling

Reflection Questions – Lesson 6

1. How does Gerry's view of calling differ from what you've been taught before? What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
2. How might our work and ministry be different if we saw our calling in terms of being (becoming more Christ-like) than in terms of doing (involvement in a specific role or ministry)?

Lesson 7 – Salvation: Elements of the Gospel

1. What God does

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Acts 2:22 | Jesus is Emmanuel |
| Acts 2:23 | Jesus was crucified |
| Acts 2:24-32 | Jesus was raised from the dead |
| Acts 2:23 | Jesus was exalted |
| Acts 2:34 | Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit |

2. How we respond

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Acts 2:37 | Convicted |
| Acts 2:38 | Repent (Acts 26:20, Matthew 3:8) |
| Acts 2:41 | Trust |
| Acts 2:41 | Be Baptized |

3. What the results are:

| | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Acts 2:38 | Forgiveness of sins |
| Acts 2:38 | Gift of Holy Spirit: New life |
| Acts 2:46 | New Community |
| Acts 2:47 | New Mission |
| | New Hope: Heaven |

The Spirit-Empowered Gospel (Acts 2)

Adapted slightly from chapter 1, Mark Driscoll and Gerry Breshears, *Vintage Church*, Crossway, 2009.

Acts 2 is widely appreciated by Christians across varying denominational traditions and theological persuasions as the record of the dawning of the New Covenant Church. Jesus poured out his Spirit to begin and to commission the church—the community of Holy Spirit regenerated and empowered people who continue the ministry of Jesus.

Some people ask, “What is the gospel?” and then proceed with their own speculations, as if God never revealed it to us. A better answer is to read the Bible! There we find Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, which summarizes the gospel, the power center of the mission of the church. The gospel pattern of Acts 2, as well as of other Scriptures, breaks down into three aspects: (1) Revelation, or what God did; (2) Response, or what we do; and (3) Results, or what God gives.¹

Revelation: What God Did

Peter begins by affirming that Jesus fulfills the promises of a divine Messiah, God come among us as accredited him by miracles, signs, and wonders (v. 22). Next, Peter declares that Jesus died on the cross according to God’s prophetic purpose (v. 23). Peter proceeds to emphasize the reality that God raised Jesus from death in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (vv. 24–32). Peter concludes with the two final acts of God exalting Jesus to the right hand of the Father in triumph over the spiritual powers and pouring out the Spirit in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (vv. 33–35).

Response: What We Do

The first thing we are to do in response to God’s revelation is realize our need for salvation, crying “what shall we do?” That leads us to repent (vv. 36–37). Repentance is the Spirit-empowered acknowledgement of sin that results in a change of mind about who/what is God in my life, what is important, and what is good and bad. This is followed by a change of behavior flowing out of an internal change of values. The second response is to accept the revealed message about Jesus by Spirit-empowered faith (v. 41). Faith means taking God at his word and trusting my life and eternity to the truth of his revelation. All of this is seen in the act of baptism which is the visible expression of our connection with the death and resurrection of Jesus through repentance and faith (vv. 38, 41).

Results: What God Gives

Peter immediately announces the gift of forgiveness of our sins, which is the result of the propitiatory death of Jesus (v. 38). This gift flows into justification, or the imputed righteousness of Jesus. Peter goes on to the second gift, the Holy Spirit and the new heart and new life of Christ (v. 38). This is regeneration, or the imparted righteousness of Jesus, is for living a new life as a Christian with, like, for, to, and by the living Jesus. The third gift is membership in the body of Christ, the new community of the Spirit called the church. This community is a supernatural community where God’s power is seen from miracles and supernatural signs to the sharing of possessions among the community members and giving to all in need (vv. 41–47).

¹ These three organizational points are adapted from Steve Walker, pastor of Redeemer’s Fellowship, Roseburg, OR. The same basic outline can be seen in Luke 24:46–47; Acts 10:39–43; 13:26–39; Romans 4:22–25; and 1 Corinthians 15:1–8.

This full and robust biblical understanding of the gospel is incredibly important. There are many truncations of the gospel in today's church. Some overemphasize the missional aspect of the church and in so doing abandon the theological truth that Jesus is God who came in the flesh to die and propitiate the just wrath of God toward sin. Others overemphasize the experiential aspect of the church and focus almost exclusively on renewal and worship while neglecting God's missional calling for the church to be incarnational like Jesus and actively involved in their community and its culture. Perhaps the most common overemphasis is the confessional reduction of the gospel to Jesus' death, forgiveness of sin, and imputed righteousness leading to eternal life in heaven. While this is true, it neglects Jesus' exemplary life, resurrection, imparted life of regeneration, and the rich life of the missional community of the church on the earth until we see him face to face.

Tragically, many Christians have lost the understanding of the new life of the Spirit. They do not preach or live the regeneration of believers. Rather than living out a joy-filled life flowing from their deepest desire to be like Jesus, they settle for being sinners saved by grace, obligated to do all they can to keep the law of God by duty rather than delight. Subsequently, they have lost the double gift of imputed righteousness, which accompanies our justification, and the imparted righteousness of the indwelling Spirit, which accompanies our new heart and regeneration. On the cross God did a work for us by saving us through the death of Jesus in our place for our sins. At Pentecost we then see that God does a work in us through the Holy Spirit in our hearts for our regeneration. Together, both our eternity and every step along the way can be filled with hope, joy, purpose, and passion if we see the relationship between the cross and Pentecost.

God promised a new covenant when Messiah came: "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."² In the Bible, "heart" does not usually refer to the physical organ but rather the metaphorical center, seat, and sum of who we are. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Therefore, if our life is a river, it flows from the wellspring of our heart. The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the heart as the source of the Christian life and Christian church;

People who are regenerated are repeatedly spoken of throughout the New Testament as new people with a new identity, new mind, new desires, new emotions, new power, new hope, new joy, new love, new passion, and new freedom to live a new life. Therefore, by the Spirit's power and our heart's desire, we live for, like, through, by, and with Jesus Christ for God's glory and our joy. We live out as missionaries for Jesus in the world by loving our neighbors. We also gather together as the church to grow together in love for our spiritual brothers and sisters, all of which is done out of love for God because he has loved us so well.

² Ezek. 36:26–27.

Reflection Questions – Lesson 7

1. Which aspects of the gospel, as Gerry has outlined it, are often overlooked in our presentations of salvation? What might be the impact if they were included?
2. What are the differences between justification and sanctification? How can those differences be communicated and exemplified to unbelievers and believers in a way that is clear?

Lesson 8 – Work

1. Created to be Co-workers with God

Adam and Eve: Work in Genesis 1-2

2. Work and Retirement

Common definition of work: What you do to earn money, so you can do what you want to do.

3. The Purpose of Work

The gracious expression of the creative energy of the Lord, in the service of others, to create shalom

1 Thessalonians 4:9-11

4. Working with God

1 Samuel 16: The Battle is the Lord's

The Lord's Prayer

5. Work as a Spiritual Discipline

6. The Purpose of Business

Business exists in society in order to provide a platform where people can express aspects of their God given identity through meaningful and creative work and to provide goods and services to a community to enable it to flourish.

Jeff VanDuzer

Reflections Questions – Lesson 8

1. What brings you most satisfaction in work? How does this fit into Gerry's definition of the purpose of work? Are there changes needed in how you approach work?
2. How might seeing your business as a means of serving others change the way you do business? Which of those changes can you make this year?

Lesson 9 – Justice

1. What is justice and righteousness?

Romans 13

2. Jesus' view of justice

Matthew 5: 17-20

Matthew 6:1-2

3. God and justice

Deuteronomy 10: 17-18

Psalm 146:7

4. Faithfulness aspects of justice

Ezekiel 18:5-9

5. Disadvantaging ourselves for justice

6. Justice and Shalom

7. Injustice

“Keeping my stuff to myself for my own comfort” Micah 6:1-8

Reflections Questions – Lesson 9

1. Bruce Waltke says that doing justice is inconveniencing myself for the sake of the community. Would you add (or subtract?) anything from this definition? What impact might it have on the church and community if we applied this definition in our lives?
2. What is the most personally challenging concept in Gerry's discussion of justice? What would it take to put this concept into practice?

Lesson 10 – Rest

1. Does rest mean nothing?

Colossians 2:17

Matthew 11: 28 – 30

Matthew 12: 1-8

2. Three types of rest: Hebrews 4, 6

- a. Entering into God's promised land
- b. God's satisfaction in accomplishment
- c. Our rest by trusting God

3. Ordering my life according to the Divine Ordering

4. What rest looks like

Right relationship with God:

Trust

Ordering my life

Celebrating in the rhythms of life

Reflections Questions – Lesson 10

1. Do you agree with Gerry that letting work become our identity is a way of hiding from Him and others? What steps can we take to avoid or fix this?
2. Who is setting the rhythm of your life? How do we better allow God to do that? What does it look like when He controls those rhythms?