

Separating Our Worth from Our Work

“And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” – Genesis 2:16-17

“And to the man he said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” – Genesis 3:17-19

Adam and Eve have a choice – Trust God or not. Let God call the shots or call their own. Rely on God or rely on themselves. They decide that God can't be trusted, and so they declare independence from God. They walk away from God and his authority in their lives, and the moment they do, the world starts veering off course.

Before the Fall, the ground is blessed. After the Fall, the ground is cursed. We were designed for work; but now we experience toil. The curse is the hardship and frustration that now accompany work. Work is still a gift, but now it's a broken gift.

We are created to belong to God. In the garden, our identity and worth come from God. Outside of the garden, we replace God with something else as our source of identity and worth – and often that something else is work. Outside of the garden, we find our identity in what we do. Outside of the garden, we tie our worth to our work. If our work defines who we are, then our sense of worth rises and falls with how well we do compared to others.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to discover the freedom of finding our worth in God and in God alone. Jesus came to undo the curse of Genesis 3. Jesus came to exchange it with his blessing in every area of life – “as far as the curse is found.” Jesus came to restore our broken world. Jesus came to redeem us, all of who we are, including our work.

Reflection/Application Questions

- In what ways am I struggling at work/school? Am I experiencing ‘meaningless toil’ vs. ‘meaningful work’? What would it look like for Jesus to infuse my work with new meaning and potential?
- Do I tie my worth to my work? How can I find my identity and worth in God? How can I be ‘rooted and established in love’ before I begin my work?