For some this word represents drudgery and the mundane. For others work is an idol to be served. If you find yourself anywhere on the spectrum from workaholic to weekend warrior, it's time to bridge the gap between Sunday worship and Monday work.

Striking a balance between theological depth and practical counsel, Tom Nelson outlines God's purposes for work in a way that helps us to make the most of our vocation and to join God in his work in the world. Discover a new perspective on work that will transform your workday and make the majority of your waking hours matter, not only now, but for eternity.

“Work Matters will inspire and encourage you to reexamine not only your understanding of work but of yourself as well.”

RAVI ZACHARIAS

“Nelson does a marvelous job of walking his readers through a robust theology of work, and he does so in a very provocative way.

Work Matters will compel you to approach work differently.”

MOE GIRKINS, author, Mother Leads Best and 50 Women Who are Transforming Leadership

TOM NELSON (DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) has served as senior pastor of Christ Community Church in Leawood, Kansas, for more than twenty years. He is also a conference speaker and author of books including Five Smooth Stones: Discovering the Path to Wholeness of Soul and Ekklesia: Rediscovering God's Design for the Church.

CHRISTIAN LIVING
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It was on a curvy stretch of California’s picturesque Pacific Coast Highway that in our rental car we made a quick stop. Our family vacation guidebook had piqued our interest about the rugged shoreline of the Point Arguello area. The day was bright and sunny. A light ocean breeze greeted us as we stepped out of the car. The view of the Pacific Ocean was simply stunning.

As we breathed in the beauty of the moment, my mind drifted to a tragic event that had occurred on these treacherous, rugged shores. The day was September 8, 1923. A squadron of US destroyers steamed southward down the California coast. Led by the USS Delphy, the squadron was on a twenty-four-hour training mission from San Francisco to San Diego. Just north of Point Arguello, a thick blanket of fog rolled in. Unaware of the danger that lurked in the fog dead ahead of them, the navigator on the USS Delphy directed the column of ships to swing a few degrees east. Relying on the skill of his navigator, Captain R. A. Dawes confidently cruised through the fog, maintaining a fast speed of twenty knots. Suddenly, the USS Delphy smashed broadside into the rocky Point Arguello shoreline. The sheer force of the massive collision of welded steel and jagged rock split the hull of the USS Delphy in half. Before Captain Dawes could notify the rest of the squadron, six other destroyers had run aground on the rocky shoreline, their once-impressive hulls lying bruised and
battered, listing in the pounding waves. On that fateful, foggy day off California’s rocky coast the United States not only lost some very fine sailors, the Navy also lost more combat ships than they would during the entire course of World War I.

As I stood overlooking the Pacific Ocean, reflecting on the naval tragedy that had occurred there, I was reminded of how perilous a heavy blanket of fog can prove to be in our lives. It is all too easy to find ourselves fogged in when it comes to those things that matter most in life. Of course we have good intentions of not running aground on the rocky shorelines we inevitably encounter, yet we often cruise through life in a fog, at breakneck speed, without gaining the necessary navigational wisdom we need.

When it comes to your work, perhaps you are feeling a bit fogged in at the moment. It could be that your work has you simply living for the weekend. Maybe you are looking for some clearer direction about your work, and you need some timely wisdom to guide you. Whether you really like your present work or you are stoically enduring your job, I am hopeful that a small investment of your time will be well worth your effort. In our technologically driven, complex, and ever-changing modern world, navigating our work and the workplaces we inhabit requires thoughtful reflection.

Thanks to our laptop computers, cell phones, and other technological advances, our work can take place almost anywhere. We can do our work at home, on a factory floor, in a cubicle of a corporate office, at a desk in a classroom, on an athletic field, or in a small business setting. Sometimes we are paid for our work, and sometimes financial remuneration is not part of the picture. But regardless of the setting, the often unsettling truth is that while we shape our work, our work shapes us and the world around us. As we look around our fragmented world, we feel a sense of responsibility to positively contribute to the common good, yet we wonder if our work is really making any difference.
I believe how we view our work and how we do our work matters a great deal more than we might imagine. Yet when it comes to this important area of my life, particularly how my work connects to my Christian faith, I must confess I have often found myself in a thick fog. Sad to say, as both a follower of Jesus and as one whose work is to assist others in their spiritual growth, I have repeatedly run aground on some pretty rocky theological shorelines. With the best of intentions and the sincerest of heart, I have led others aground on some faulty ideas about faith and work. I have wrongly viewed some kinds of work as being more important than others. On several occasions in my life, I have drifted to the perilous edge of workaholism, conveniently making an idol out of my work. For way too long, I did not see work as an essential component of a broader, robust theology of Christian calling, nor did I see how the gospel transforms work. I failed to grasp that a primary stewardship of my pastoral work was to assist and equip others to better connect the professions of their Sunday faith with the practices of their Monday work. As a pastor, I regret that I have often given minority attention to what most of us do the majority of our time. I am most grateful for the extra measure of grace extended to me by so many as I have wrestled to more integrally incorporate a biblical theology of vocation into my own life and ministry.

Out of my own inadequacies and shortcomings, an increasing passion has been birthed in my heart. Even in a small way, I long to help clear the fog that has settled in the minds of many followers of Jesus who deeply desire to faithfully integrate their Christian faith into their work. David Miller, who is one of the foremost thinkers on faith and work, speaks of the growing number of us who live increasingly bifurcated lives in which faith and work seldom seem to connect. David observes, “Many who are Christians complain of a ‘Sunday-Monday gap,’ where their Sunday worship hour bears little to no relevance to the issues they face in their Monday workplace hours.”1 If you feel fogged in when it comes to your faith and your work, if you sense a sizable
INTRODUCTION

Sunday-to-Monday gap, let me assure you that in God’s sovereign grace there is a transforming and rewarding way forward.

But before we begin our exploration of work, it is important for us to clarify a few things about Christian vocation in general. The theology of Christian vocation is wide and sweeping in its breadth and significance. The word *vocation* simply means “calling.” Properly understood, Christian vocation is centered in a sovereign God who calls us to embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ and to follow him in the power of the Holy Spirit as his disciples. The good news of the gospel is that a transforming relationship with God is not based on anything we have done or could ever do, but on what Christ has already done for us by shedding his atoning blood on the cross. In Christ we experience a new birth and we live brand-new lives in his kingdom here and now. We are and continue to be transformed in and through the power of the gospel. Our work, too, is transformed. When we come to the foot of the cross, we bring with us what we do as well as who we are. The gospel, properly understood, leads us to a seamless faith.

Os Guinness has given considerable thought to a robust theology of vocation. Keeping the gospel central, Os makes a helpful distinction between our primary calling and our secondary callings. He rightly points out that Scripture first and foremost emphasizes our primary calling to Christ. Os writes, “Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him and for him. First and foremost we are called to Someone, not to something or to somewhere.” But Os also insightfully points out that each one of us has also been given a secondary calling, and an essential aspect of this particular calling is to do a specific work. Yet because we refer to work as a secondary calling, we must not in any way minimize work’s importance in living lives of Christian faithfulness. A large portion of our time on earth is given to our work, and we would be wise to take this stewardship seriously.

On the pages that follow we will focus our attention on our secondary calling to work. In the first section of the book, we
will look at our work through a biblical lens. What does Scripture say about our work? What does God intend for our work? The second section will focus on how God shapes our lives in and through our work. What would it really look like if our Sunday faith connected seamlessly to our Monday work? What are the important implications and opportunities that our work provides for us and for our world as we seek to live out a gospel witness and be a faithful presence in our workplace? We are going to discover that what we do each and every day during the majority of our waking hours really matters not only now, but also for all eternity. We all find ourselves at different places in our faith journeys, but as we explore together the rich truths of Scripture, my prayerful hope is that some of the fog in your mind may clear, and you will experience a more integral, seamless faith. I pray that your calling to a specific work may bring with it a new dynamism of heartfelt joy and purpose.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

• Do you see your work as a calling?

• How might thinking of work as a calling transform the way you do your work and the kind of work you do?

• What are some ways you currently connect your Sunday faith and your Monday work?

• How might connecting Sunday faith to Monday work change the way you view work?
The animated movie WALL-E is a cute story of a curious robot whose job is to clean up a trashed earth. While humans once inhabited the earth, we soon discover that they have been evacuated from earth with the hopes of returning one day after robots clean up the mess. Though a hardworking robot, WALL-E has a rather lonely existence. But that changes when WALL-E meets another robot by the name of Eve. WALL-E quickly gains a fondness for his newfound friend whose name evokes a biblical image of creation.

WALL-E enthusiastically pursues EVE to the point of making an unplanned journey, via spaceship, to a high-tech space station where humans who have made a real mess of planet Earth are now living a “utopian,” carefree, work-free existence. As residents of the space station, humans are waited on hand
and foot by robots attending to their every whim and desire. As a result, the pampered humans have become self-indulgent, bored couch potatoes. With the passage of time, adult humans now resemble giant babies with soft faces, rounded torsos, and stubby, weak limbs—the tragic deforming and atrophying result of human beings doing nothing but cruising around on cushy, padded, reclining chairs, their eyes fixed on video screens, taking in large amounts of calories, and sipping from straws sticking out of giant cups.

As a movie watcher, the high-tech space station filled with human couch potatoes is anything but appealing. The creators of WALL-E explore many important themes, but possibly none more compelling than what it means to be human. WALL-E reminds us that a do-nothing couch potato existence is actually repulsive and dehumanizing. But why is this? As human beings we were not created to be do-nothings; we were created with work in mind.

**CREATED WITH WORK IN MIND**

As human beings, we have been designed not only to rest and to play but also to work. From the very beginning of Scripture we see that the one true God is not a couch potato God, nor did he create a couch potato world. As the Genesis storyline opens, we read, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Here we are immediately introduced to God as a thoughtful and creative worker. At first glance we observe the triune God as an active deity. The Spirit of God is hovering over the waters. God’s infinite creativity, omnipotence, and omniscience are unleashed, and he is intimately engaged in his good creation.

As God’s work of creation unfolds, humankind—the crown of creation—emerges on the literary landscape. God the Creator places a distinguishing stamp of uniqueness on human beings, one that sets humanity apart from the rest of creation. Then God said,
“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26–28)

The Genesis writer wants us to grasp the unique place of human beings in creation. We observe this uniqueness in two foundational ways. First, humans are designed by God to exercise proper dominion over creation, which is a divinely delegated stewardship role. Second, humans are designed by God to be his image-bearers, to uniquely reflect who God is to his good world. The repeated use of the word image by the Genesis writer tells us of the importance of this concept for our understanding of what it means to be human.

**Image-Bearers of God**

As God’s image-bearers, we were created to mirror the glory and excellence of the triune God. An image-bearer is designed to reflect the image of another. I was reminded of this truth as my wife, Liz, and I were cheering on our Kansas City Royals baseball team. While enjoying a beautiful summer evening at Kauffman Stadium, we had a delightful conversation with the wife of a professional baseball player whose present work and vocational calling is being a mom and raising her children. Sitting in the row right in front of us were two of her beautiful children whom we had not seen for a couple of years. The last time we had seen them they were still infants, and now at three and five years old, their budding personalities and appearances were emerging. As I looked at their five-year-old son, I was simply stunned at how much he was like his dad. The closer I looked, the more amazed I
became. His physical appearance remarkably resembled his dad, though on a smaller scale. The boy’s voice sounded the same. Even as a five-year-old he had similar mannerisms, and like his dad he was already into baseball. I couldn’t help but comment to my wife, Liz, “Look at him; he is the spitting image of his dad!”

I am not in any way suggesting that we are somehow little gods or that we will ever be God, but as human beings we were created to reflect our heavenly Father. In a sense we were created to be his spitting image. We were created to worship God and to display a glimpse of God’s glory to a vast and expanding universe. This glimpse of God’s glory reveals many things about the character and magnificence of the one true God, and at a very foundational level, we must recognize our image-bearing reveals that God is a creator, a worker. God is not some cosmic do-nothing deity.

**WHY DO WE WORK?**

While commuting to my office, on more than one occasion I have seen a bumper sticker that provides one answer to this question of why we work: “I owe, I owe, it’s off to work I go.” Paying the many bills that come to us each month is no small matter. We can all give testimony to the high cost of modern-day living, but is economic transaction the foundational reason why we work?

Scripture tells us that the most bedrock answer to the question of why we work is that we were created with work in mind. Being made in God’s image, we have been designed to work, to be fellow workers with God. To be an image-bearer is to be a worker. In our work we are to show off God’s excellence, creativity, and glory to the world. We work because we bear the image of One who works. This is why the apostle Paul writes to a group of first-century followers of Jesus who have embraced the gospel, “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). At first blush, Paul’s rather blunt words seem cold and lacking
Christian compassion, but upon further theological reflection, Paul’s words convey to us some needed insight. Paul does not rebuke those who, for various legitimate reasons, cannot work, but he does say that an unwillingness to work is no trivial thing. For anyone to refuse to work is a fundamental violation of God’s creation design for humankind.

When we grasp what God intended for his image-bearers, it is not surprising that throughout the book of Proverbs the wise are praised for their diligence and the foolish are rebuked for their laziness. When we hear the word fool, we often think of someone who is mentally deficient. However, a foolish person in Scripture is not necessarily one who lacks intelligence but rather one who lives as if God does not exist. The psalmist puts it this way: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1). A fool is one who rejects not only the Creator but also creation design, including the design to work. Throughout Scripture slothfulness is rightly viewed in a negative light. A slothful Christian is a contradiction in terms. We should not be shocked to see that the Christian church throughout history has reflected negative sentiments about slothfulness. Sloth finds a prominent place in Pope Gregory the Great’s listing of the seven deadly sins. The Protestant Reformers spoke of the poverty of slothfulness and laziness. Consistently they made the connection that those who spend their time in idleness and ease should rightly doubt the sincerity of their Christian commitment.

God could have placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and made it much like the world of humans in WALL-E, where they could sit around with food coming to them, sipping their life-giving nutrients out of giant cups. This was not God’s desire or his design for his good world. Because God himself is a worker, and because we are his image-bearers, we were designed to reflect who God is in, through, and by our work. The work we are called to do every day is an important part of our image-bearing nature and stewardship. As human beings we were created to do things.
In this sense we are not only human beings, we are also human doings. We have been created to contribute to God’s good world.

**CREATED TO CONTRIBUTE**

First and foremost, work is not about economic exchange, financial remuneration, or a pathway to the American Dream, but about God-honoring human creativity and contribution. Our work, whatever it is, whether we are paid for it, is our specific human contribution to God’s ongoing creation and to the common good. Work is an integral aspect of being human, an essential aspect of loving God and his created world, and a vital part of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Gilbert Meilaender presses into the rich implications of the truths presented to us in the Genesis account. He writes, “To regard work as a calling is to suggest that we live to work, that our work is of central significance for our person. Still more, the calling gives to work a religious significance which it is not likely to acquire in any other way.” For us to view work outside a theological framework is to inevitably devalue both work and the worker.

The creation account recorded for us in Genesis 2 emphasizes God’s design for humanity and the significant contribution the crown of creation is to make in his good world. Prior to God forming man from the dust of the earth and breathing life into him, before sin entered the world, the Genesis writer raises a tension regarding the incompleteness of God’s creation. In Genesis chapter 2:5 we read that “there was no man to work the ground.” In other words, God created humans not only to worship him and to delight in him, but to make an important ongoing contribution to his creation. From Genesis 2 we see that the earth itself was created in order to be cultivated and shaped by humankind. Unspoiled pristine nature is not necessarily a preferred state. God desired that there would be harmonious human cooperation within the creation order. Not only would the crown of creation have joyful intimacy with their Creator, but they would also be
given the joyful privilege of contributing to the work of God in his good world.

As Genesis chapter 2 continues, we get a further picture of a human being as a worker. We observe work as it was originally designed to be, before sin and death entered the world. In Genesis 2:15 we read these words, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” The Lord God takes the initiative and places humankind in the garden of Eden with a particular task in mind. The emphasis here is not about personal human choice but rather divine initiative and divine calling. Already in Genesis we see that vocation is not something we ultimately choose for ourselves; it is something to which God calls us. Contrary to much of our present cultural emphasis that deifies personal choice, a biblical worldview begins not with human choice, but with a good and sovereign God who is not only the Creator but also the Caller. Here in the Genesis narrative, before humanity’s fall into sin and resulting corruption of the world and our work, we are given two bedrock truths regarding human work and vocation: we were created with an important stewardship in mind, to cultivate creation and to keep it; and we are commissioned by God to nurture, care for, and protect his creation.

A STEWARDSHIP POSTURE

Humankind, the crown of creation, was created for the glory of God and entrusted with a remarkable stewardship exercising dominion over the earth. A vital aspect of this stewardship is the essential work not only of tending things and making things but also of cultivating and creating culture. Andy Crouch convincingly undermines the rationale for both Christian withdrawal from the common culture and for Christian hubris that projects a kind of utopian triumphalism of changing the world. Crouch suggests Christians adopt a stewardship posture anchored in cultivation and creation, what he often refers to as culture making.
The stewardship of culture making involves both cultivators and creators. Crouch describes cultivators as “people who tend and nourish what is best in human culture, who do the hard and painstaking work to preserve the best of what people before us have done.” Creators, he says, are “people who dare to think and do something that has never been thought or done before, something that makes the world more welcoming and thrilling and beautiful.” Andy Crouch makes an important point. Humanity’s creative work is varied, broad and far reaching. We not only make things or fix things, but also we are actively involved in creating and cultivating human culture itself.

**AVODAH**

The language of work as cultivation and creation in Genesis 2:15 is embedded in the Hebrew word *avodah*, which is behind the English translation “to cultivate.” The Hebrew word *avodah* is translated in various ways in the Old Testament. It is rendered as “work,” “service,” or “craftsmanship” in many instances, yet other times it is translated as “worship.” *Avodah* is used to describe the back-breaking hard work of God’s covenant people making bricks as slaves in Egypt (Ex. 1:14), the artisans building the tabernacle (Ex. 35:24), and the fine craftsmanship of linen workers (1 Chron. 4:21). *Avodah* also appears in the context of Solomon dedicating the temple. Solomon employs this word as he instructs the priests and Levites regarding their service in leading corporate worship and praise of the one true God (2 Chron. 8:14). Whether it is making bricks, crafting fine linen, or leading others in corporate praise and worship, the Old Testament writers present a seamless understanding of work and worship. Though there are distinct nuances to *avodah*, a common thread of meaning emerges where work, worship, and service are inextricably linked and intricately connected. The various usages of this Hebrew word found first in Genesis 2:15 tell us that God's original design and desire is that our work and our
worship would be a seamless way of living. Properly understood, our work is to be thoughtfully woven into the integral fabric of Christian vocation, for God designed and intended our work, our vocational calling, to be an act of God-honoring worship.

**WORK AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP**

So often we think of worship as something we do on Sunday and work as something we do on Monday. However, this dichotomy is not what God designed nor what he desires for our lives. God designed work to have both a vertical and horizontal dimension. We work to the glory of God and for the furtherance of the common good. On Sunday we say we go to worship and on Monday we say we go to work, but our language reveals our foggy theological thinking. That our work has been designed by God to be an act of worship is often missed in the frenzied pace of a compartmentalized modern life.

One of our favorite family vacations was visiting England. Touring beautiful Westminster Abbey and Christopher Wren’s truly breathtaking St. Paul’s Cathedral was one of my personal highlights. As I walked through these beautiful and inspiring architectural works of art, I was reminded of the apocryphal story of the three stone masons who were engaged in conversation by a visitor. “What are you doing?” the visitor asked the first mason. “I am cutting stone,” the mason replied. A second mason chimed in, “I’m making a living.” “And how about you?” the visitor asked the third mason. “Me, I’m building a cathedral for God and his people.” What a difference our perspective on work makes!

**AN AUDIENCE OF ONE**

When our children were young, my wife, Liz, and I tried to impress on them that we live and work before an Audience of One. Our line of thought went something like this: If God is
aware and cares for every sparrow that falls, then we know that our loving heavenly Father watches over us wherever we are and whatever we are doing. Nothing we think, say, or do ever escapes God’s loving, caring, and watchful eye. Living before an Audience of One also means that all we do and say is to be an act of God-honoring worship. Of course we all fell short many times in keeping this perspective in mind, but, as a gymnast, our daughter, Sarah, latched on to this transforming truth.

Over the many years of her devotion to the sport of gymnastics, Sarah encountered the daily hard work of preparation, the exhilaration of victory, and the agony of defeat. Through the good and the bad times, Sarah remained remarkably focused and resilient. Sadly, Sarah’s gymnastics career was cut short due to a severe ankle injury. Years later we were reminiscing about her years of being a competitive gymnast. I asked Sarah how it was that she stayed so buoyant during those years. She looked at me and said, “Dad, remember you and mom taught me to live before an Audience of One.”

Doing our work before an Audience of One changes what we do and how we do it. Living with this mind-set helps us connect our faith with our work, for we live before the same Audience on Monday at work as we do on Sunday at worship. Dorothy Sayers, a contemporary of C. S. Lewis, gave a lot of thought to how followers of Christ who have embraced the gospel ought to see their work. She also spoke in a compelling way about how the church has so often dropped the ball when it comes to connecting our Sunday faith with Monday work. In a thoughtful essay simply titled “Why Work?” Sayers writes, “The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to [moral instruction and church attendance]. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables. . . .”5 Dorothy Sayers is not saying that offering moral instruction and inspiring worship services is unimportant. Clearly this is an important stewardship of any
gospel preaching and Christ-honoring local church. But what we must not miss in her insightful words is the importance of the church in teaching each one of us that our work, whatever it is, is to be an act of worship. With remarkable insight Sayers continues, “Let the church remember this: that every maker and worker is called to serve God in his profession or trade—not outside it. . . . The only Christian work is good work well done.”

So often we use the language of Christian work to refer exclusively to ecclesiastical, missionary, or parachurch callings, but this distorted understanding exposes our inadequate grasp of the transforming truths of Christian vocation. It is hard to imagine how our understanding of work and the quality of our work would change if we would truly live before an Audience of One and fully embrace the truth that the only Christian work is good work well done. Dorothy Sayers is not being novel; she is simply saying what the apostle Paul penned to the first century local church at Colossae: “Whatever you do, 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” (Col. 3:23–24).

**Rethinking Work**

Though our work may be difficult and at times exasperating, we do not have to hate our work or merely live for the weekends. We need to rethink how we think about our work. When we begin to embrace how work ought to be, then we begin to see what we do each and every day as an integral part of our worship of God. If you understand that God designed you to contribute to his creation, you will take seriously how and where you are called to make your important contribution in the world.

When we thoughtfully reflect on God’s original design for our work, we are inspired with its beauty and grandeur, but
we also realize that work and the workplaces we inhabit in our present world are not as God designed them to be. You may be thinking, Tom, this reflection on God’s design for our work all sounds well and good, but you don’t know the difficulty of my work or the pressures of my workplace or what a difficult boss I work for! And you are right in the sense that I don’t know all that you are facing in this competitive, fast-paced world. I may not know the particularities of your work, but over the years I have interacted with many people about their work, and I do know that for each one of us who desires to connect our Sunday faith with our Monday work, the ongoing challenges are ever present and significant.

THE OFFICE

I must confess I am an enthusiastic fan of the television show The Office. Each week the Dunder Mifflin gang makes their way into our living room. The Scranton division of a fictitious paper company by the name of Dunder Mifflin and the cast of characters have become a lasting fixture in our imaginations. The Office, at first glance, gives a humorous depiction of work and workplace antics, but the more you enter into the lives of these characters and the workplace they inhabit, the more painfully broken it seems. On display every week for the entire world to see is the ongoing drama of very broken individuals who daily bump into each other in the workplace. Though the writers of The Office sometimes go over the edge for my tastes, each week they remind a watching world that work is an important part of what it means to be human. The Office says to us that we were created to work, yet unresolved tensions fill the air of every episode, and we are left to ponder that work now is not what it really ought to be.

Daily we are confronted by a sobering reality that our work, the workers we work with, and the workplaces in which we work are not as God originally designed them. In a myriad of ways we are painfully reminded each and every day that
we live and work in a fallen and corrupted world. Like many other things in life, work in this less-than-perfect world is a mixed bag. This is the inescapable reality to which we will turn our attention next.

**A Prayer for Our Work**

*Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!* (Ps. 90:16–17)

**Questions for Reflection and Discussion:**

- How does knowing that you are created in the image of a God who works change the way you view work?
- In what ways does your work serve to create and cultivate culture?
- What would change in your work if you maintained the mindset that you live and work before an Audience of One?
- How might you do your work as a God-honoring act of worship?
My wife, Demi, and I started our company in 1991, and I think, like many people, we had good intentions. We wanted to create a decent company, make a decent living, and perhaps do some good. At that point, we thought the “good” would come mostly at the end of the year when we figured out what our profits for the year had been and, therefore, what we should tithe. In the midnineties we started to study the fullness of the Christian story more, including the biblical narrative on vocation. I remember it seemed like water to a dry soul when we began to realize that we were made in the image of a God who worked and who created us to work. I remember for the first time understanding that I could feel God’s pleasure in and through my work every day, not just when the accounting books were closed at the end of the year. And this idea that my Monday through Friday could be a sweet aroma to him, that the essence of my work could be pleasing to him, helped me make the transition from a job to a vocation. And it colored my world, literally.

Demi and I no longer have a sense that there are other more significant or “spiritual” vocations. God made us the way we are, and therefore, as entrepreneurs, we are doing that which he alone determines is our most sacred response to him. And so we try to create a place where every decision matters, where the way we negotiate contracts matters, where the beauty of the buildings we build matters, where the freedom or lack thereof that we create for our colleagues matters. We understand that each and every gift item we create has a story, and that we are implicated in the story it tells. We know that how we and our colleagues treat our partner factories, our UPS or FedEx drivers, the artisans we work with, and the kind of team that cleans our facility every night matters; it’s a reflection of our beliefs and view of work. Each and every day, in the sacred of the mundane, we understand that our
vocations matter to God, as he is the one who created and ordained us for those specific roles in life. None are more “spiritual” than others. Rather, we determine daily, through our thoughts and words and actions, whether we choose to honor him through our work. And what a joy it is to sense his pleasure when we do.
WORK. For some this word represents drudgery and the mundane. For others work is an idol to be served. If you find yourself anywhere on the spectrum from workaholic to weekend warrior, it’s time to bridge the gap between Sunday worship and Monday work.

Striking a balance between theological depth and practical counsel, Tom Nelson outlines God’s purposes for work in a way that helps us to make the most of our vocation and to join God in his work in the world. Discover a new perspective on work that will transform your workday and make the majority of your waking hours matter, not only now, but for eternity.

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TOM NELSON (DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) has served as senior pastor of Christ Community Church in Leawood, Kansas, for more than twenty years. He is also a conference speaker and author of books including Five Smooth Stones: Discovering the Path to Wholeness of Soul and Ekklesia: Rediscovering God’s Design for the Church.