

Ephesians 4:28 (HCSB)

The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need

Covenant Living: Righteous Vocation

Theme: honesty and work-ethic

Point: your vocation IS your ministry

FCF: self-preservation

App: do everything to bless others

Intro: When God saves a person, there is a fundamental change in their identity, which gives them a different way to view the world, and subsequently, affects the well-being of others around them.

1) identity 2) worldview 3) relationships {e.g. Ephesians 4:25-27}

A different way to view work...

a change in identity

The thief must no longer steal¹

The old person had to supplement a need by stealing or cutting corners² (self-preservation)

The new person doesn't worry about self - Matt. 6:25-34 [READ] (identity creates v.33)

more on the identity of the new person...there is a...

a renewal of vocation

He must do honest work with his own hands³

If work isn't centered on meeting one's needs, what is it driven by?

The creation mandate!

Genesis 1:26-28 (HCSB)

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it."

God created image-bearers to create and cultivate after Him.⁴ *Meaning that...*

- **labor is meaningful**⁵

we might only think of work as "meaningful" if it is *clerical* or *spiritual*
but work is meaningful because it is commissioned by God

- **the job is sanctified by the Christian**

1 Corinthians 7:17 (HCSB) AP!

However, each one must live his life in the situation the Lord assigned when God called him. This is what I command in all the churches.

God changes your identity, renews your sense of vocation, then sticks you back in your environment with a new calling....

a call to generosity

so that he has something to share with anyone in need

You don't have to play by the world's rules anymore: money, power, ego, getting ahead, self-preservation

The world's rules are grounded in The Fall⁶

When Adam ate of the Tree, he was saying, "I don't trust God to take care of me. I am sovereign."

Work became cursed.

Though we can still see glimpses of how it should be (e.g. Jim Collin's Level 5 Leaders⁷)

We keep coming back to ancient idols, using jobs to provide a sense of security.

Why does this give us a different way to view work...isn't this verse about not stealing?

Because the motivation behind dishonest gain will taint your vocation too. It's more than about behavior.

God doesn't just call you to change your behavior, he changes your identity, and calls you to flesh it out.

Do you ever feel like your job is pointless?

Timothy Keller argues that pointlessness sets in when the only reason you are working is to amass money and comfort. Why? Because you've stepped out of God's mandate, and are trying to be sovereign

Those who feel the most purpose... **AP!**

1. Choose work we can do well
2. Choose work that can benefit others
3. Want to benefit their field of work⁸

Generosity and self-sacrifice seem to follow people with a sense of purpose in the workplace. So how do we break the curse?

The gospel: You can't yourself. You are not sovereign over your life.

It's only when we find justification for our lives that we can find any meaning or worthwhile effort in working beyond ourself.

When you can let go of sovereignty over your life, you can use your vocation to bless others.

Vicki Soto

Teacher Victoria Soto used her body to shield her students from the maniacal gunman who launched a massacre at a Connecticut school, relatives said Saturday.

She loved her "16 angels" and never wanted to let them go.

She gave her life for them by shielding them in closet. She saved their lives with her own.⁹

Her life is an example of someone who had no desire to preserve self.

Her driving passion was for 16 children.

Perhaps many of us feel simultaneously inspired and discouraged.

Because we have not been very selfless in our jobs, relationships, or lives.

But remember this....

Vicki's selfless, sacrificial act of love gives us hope in the midst of evil, because

Her heroism points us to Jesus.

Sin puts us in the crosshairs of death.

Jesus covers us with his arms and takes it for us.

Works Cited

- ¹ This exhortation to stop being a thief “illustrates the change from the old way of life to the new (vv. 22-24).” Peter T. O’Brien. *The Letter to the Ephesians* (PNTC. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1999). 342
- ² “Paul probably has in mind, then, the working poor whose income would fluctuate with the seasons in the agrarian economy of Romans Asia and who may have supplemented their income in difficult times by secretly stealing from their employers and others.” Frank Thielman. *Romans*. (BECNT. New York: 2010). 315
- ³ Peter T. O’Brien writes that this is “hard work for gain as opposed to what was obtained by theft” *Ephesians* (PNTC. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1999)
- ⁴ Abraham Kuyper applied this creation mandate to art by saying, “The world of sounds, the world of forms, the world of tints, and the world of poetic ideas, can have no other source than God; and it is our privilege as bearers of His image, to have a perception of this beautiful world, artistically to reproduce, and humanly enjoy it.” *Lectures on Calvinism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931). 157
- ⁵ The good honest work that Paul talks about doesn’t necessarily mean that we are making good products, but on a deeper level, that we are “engaged in meaningful labor.” Clint E. Arnold. *Ephesians*. (ECNT. Grand Rapids, MI: 2010). 304
- ⁶ read Genesis 3
- ⁷ Jim Collins’s empirical findings in an enormous scientific undertaking on several highly successful companies led his research team to conclude that even though conventional wisdom said that we need larger-than-life, egocentric leaders to transform companies, *some of the most successful leaders were the ones who channeled their passion, ambition, and creative energy into a story much greater than themselves*. Collins writes that “Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It’s not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious--*but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves*.” Jim Collins. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don’t*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2011) 21
- ⁸ Timothy Keller came up with this list, and also wrote that because of the creation mandate, “our goal should not simply be to do work, but to increase the human race’s capacity to cultivate the created world” *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work To God’s Work*. (New York, NY: Dutton, 2012). 110
- ⁹ Kerry Wills, Henrick Karolyszyn, and Corky Siemaszko. “Family, friends remember the brave, caring legacy of Sandy Hook teacher Vicki Soto, 27.” Daily News. Dec 15, 2012. <http://www.nydailynews.com/newtown-teacher-vicki-soto-remembered-article-1.1221004?pmSlide=0>