

A New Story, A New Power

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[0 : 00] Okay, so we're going to conclude our study this evening on faith and work with just a kind of general reminder in some ways of what we've looked at already.

And again, and it follows up I think quite neatly from Sunday evening and second John, our second study and second John, to John.

And that coming to faith in Jesus is maybe something that's been a long time in your experience a long time since it happened.

But coming to faith in Jesus is only the beginning will actually see that as well on Sunday morning. But what we come to recognize is that faith changes everything, and should always be changing everything. So the truth in our lives the truth in your life is transformative.

Not just for a Wednesday evening or a Sunday, but it's transformative to everything that we do. It comes across well in the kind of base book that we've been using every good endeavor Tim Keller, and we're going to get some of these copies to put them on the book corner, along with some other books that we're going to be advertising soon.

[1 : 22] And I would encourage you to get it. It's a really helpful book. But don't be too harsh when you're reading a single. That's where you got that from. It's none of it. There's not an original thought in our heads but it's been a good structure with which to work.

And tonight I'm just going to look at two areas briefly one is our worldview and why that should make such a difference or Christian worldview to how we work.

And then look at our worldview centers around God, and what that means, and then look at the power that that enables us to have to live in a different way in the workplace.

Okay, so the first is our worldview that centers around God and it's one of the verses that's really been key for us right through here. And it's been written since 10 verse 31. So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, whether that's paid employment, or whether that's working at home, or whether that's being retired or whatever it might be, do it all to the glory of God.

And that whole emphasis that in our lives that our faith, while it is personal and that's an incredibly important part of our lives, our faith isn't simply personal, nor is it simply religious belief.

[2 : 41] Our faith in Jesus Christ should shape and touch every single thing that we do. And that is because we come to our lives and we come to our day to day living with a story. Everyone has a story in their lives. Everyone has a backstory, a worldview that shapes how they do it might be heathenistic, it might be completely religious, it might be based on all kinds of things, but our worldview, our story, and how we see the world shapes our priorities and our choices and that's because we have increased we've got a new story of the world in which we live and that includes the world. So everything we do stems from the reality that our God is a sovereign God, and that we are His creatures, we are created in His image, we are image bearers.

So we take that whole redemptive historical picture as our foundational worldview that we're image bearers that God made us that we're rebels against God, that that is, that has caused all the troubles and difficulties both in our hearts and in the world, and that we come to rescue us with His loving sacrifice to give us freedom, future and a hope. That's our worldview. That's the lens we look at the world with. That's how we think about the world in which we live.

And that is radically different from the worldview obviously of most people. But it therefore should shape everything that we are and everything that we do. And we recognize within that worldview that work, as we've seen before, reflects God and reflects God's character that work was part of God's will for us before the fall.

And so work, we see work in that context. And that is our ultimate reality that in our lives and in our work and in all that we do there's been a cosmic shift from self, say there is an ongoing cosmic shift from self to God.

And the first four words of the Bible found our worldview in the beginning, God. That's hugely significant to our worldview because it moves the center of the universe from us to God, and that affects everything we are.

[5 : 15] The life story is governed not by that philosophical truth or that philosophical worldview, but how that impacts us personally because we have come to know and love God through Jesus Christ as our personal savior.

Because he is first in our lives we love him, and we love our neighbor. And that is therefore far deeper and far bigger than a set of propositional truths that guide our lives.

We're in a life and transforming and a life enriching experience and relationship with God. And now marriage as a relationship shadows a little bit of the kind of changes that comes into our worldview from being single to being one with another person and all the changes of our thinking that happened because of that.

But obviously in a much greater way, a relationship with Christ changes everything that we are and everything that we do. And there's a move from self to servanthood to being other centered.

And we take that into our understanding of work. And that's of course a lifelong battle. It helps us to have a balance in life between a naively positive view of life and work, or a cynically disillusioned view of life and work.

[6 : 54] And that's between the two because we recognize the goodness of work and the beauty of what God asks us to do the calling from him. But we also recognize when a broken world with broken hearts and broken relationships and the redemption of Christ enables us to have the right balance.

And that should therefore impact our worldview and the transformational nature of that worldview should transform our attitude to work.

And it might be worth asking in your own context, what is the worldview of the culture around you and of your colleagues at work. And I think we should ask some questions of them, because I'm not going to say any more about that because that's a big part of something. It's a trouble when you're preparing two sermons and first part of it blends in but Jesus asks some great questions that we'll look at on Sunday.

And that's a great way of finding out what motivates someone, what is the attitude to work, why they do it and provides an opportunity for you to share your worldview and why that transforms your attitude to work.

And we recognize within that as we've said throughout the series that work is an important command from God that there's no secular sacred divide the dualism that that brings in to our thinking.

- [8 : 22] And that's a great thing. It's great to remember that because we have a commonality with other workers, because work is a God given gift, and we can learn from other people.
- God owns the workspace that you go into. There's a great really important not to close off your Christian life and your Christian thinking on a Sunday night and go into secular mode for the rest of the week, because God owns the workplace there's a great passage.
- And that's as it reminds us of that in Isaiah 28 and verse 24 to 29 Isaiah 28.
- And he who plows for sowing plough continually does he continually open and harrow his ground. When he is leveled at surface does he not scatter dill so cumin and put in wheat and rose and barley in its proper place and emmer as the border.
- And he's really instructed his God teaches him. So it's just this recognition that God is instructing and involved in everyone's work at that level. And he owns the workspace there's cooperation, and there's commonality.
- [9 : 45] And so you others learn from them, encourage them in their work. And that's a good thing. And it's an important role that we play in our attitude to work and sharing it with others. But we recognize also, there's brokenness in the workplace and in the attitudes and the thinking and the ethics of the environment we work in.
- So, not only is there commonality but there's a distinctiveness about our Christian attitude and our values that will at times in our neighborhood in our homes in the workplace, challenged ideals and the ethics that we find around us.
- And that is maybe something that we find very difficult to do, we maybe just roll with it, or we maybe just keep quiet, or we maybe think it's not our place and it may be very difficult to do so.
- But I think it's a really challenging truth to take out of this whole series that we're not to contain our faith within our hearts, or within the church community.
- And that's not the sole place that we live out our faith. We must take God with us into the marketplace, into the workplace to see a significance and his Lordship there as well.
- [11 : 03] And the gospel, the gospel is there to refrain it to reframe all things, not just religious things. We reframe our attitude to everything and our attitude to work isn't to be taken from our colleagues primarily is to be taken from our understanding of God and the Holy Spirit within us.
- So I would argue that Sunday morning and Monday morning are the two most important mornings in the week to recalibrate your thinking.
- It's really significant Sunday morning is a really important time because you come in that day of rest it gets the opportunity of worship coming together with God's people, remembering that there's a higher, a different perspective that we have.
- And equally, Monday mornings really important to recalibrate our thinking going into the working week and to take God and Christ with us. Because our identity is not, identity is in Christ, not in our profession.
- It's very, very challenging because I don't know if there's anything wrong with this but we need to maybe sometimes think about it. The first question we usually ask someone when we meet them is what are you doing?
- [12 : 19] What's your work? What's your employment? You know, weird probably if he didn't, but nonetheless, the challenge is that we often we often therefore label people by that identity negatively or positively and in Christ and the Christian community, our identity is not in our profession, our identity is in Jesus Christ.

And I think within the working world, that's a challenge because sometimes identity of position and power, the pleasure that enables you to have the lifestyle that you can have can be as a result of, she's shot in, as a result of having a wrong attitude within the workplace. So, so our, our worldview is hugely significant as you go into the workplace.

And in concluding that aspect of it, I think it's good to consider the influence you can have. And in paid employment, obviously, whatever we are, but if you are in paid employment, consider the influence that you can bring to and can you?

Maybe you're an employer, maybe you're in leadership, maybe you're an employee. And is it that you can influence the workplace with your worldview and with your Christian faith and with your ethics, honesty, and the underlying assumptions that you bring into the workplace every day.

It should be, it should be one way or another, it should be obvious to a greater or lesser degree that our worldview is radically different, and therefore our behavior and our attitude to work and our, the way we work is very different to those that don't have such a relationship with Christ and a worldview.

[14 : 21] I've got two interesting examples about this. One comes from the book, Every Good Endeavor, and it's, Tim Keller speaks about a guy called Howard who was offered a new job.

And in the interview for the new job, his prospective new employers asked what his current salary was. And so he thought to himself, I'll just bump up by a couple of grand, two or three grand because well, in this new job I'm getting less holidays so maybe I'll just put a balance out by putting up what I actually earned.

And he did that. But then, I don't know whether this is a powerful story or whether it's real story but Tim Keller then goes on to speak about how he had a kind of breakthrough moment, this individual.

After he'd done that. And he said, well, that was a small lie. It wasn't a, wasn't a right thing to do as a Christian. He said, and what is my integrity worth? He thought, if I lie for such a little gain, for such a little increase in salary, what does it say about my integrity? Why not just have mentioned a two weeks difference in holiday and ask the employer to take that into consideration or why not just trust God to open the door in the first place to the interview?

And therefore thinking that the interest in the job was merely financial or was it a God opportunity to serve him. So it's a really simple but helpful example of how very basic integrity will change the way we act because if you're world is completely different and the integrity at that level and the white lies are insignificant and important. That's fine. Everyone does it in the workplace. But there may be a cost for us to stand up for truth in the way we act and live and in the type of business that we engage in.

[16 : 25] So my example is just something I read this week on the BBC website, an interview with Kate Forbes. Now we've mentioned Kate Forbes a few times here over the last week while I was in prayer for her.

And she was reflecting with the interviewer on her, the leadership campaign and how her evangelical free church membership and faith derail for campaign for the leadership.

And she didn't have a dramatic leave and though it ended up a pretty close run race. And, but there's an example of someone in the workplace who whose worldview was all encompassing.

She didn't have a private faith and a public political view, a public political position that didn't include her, her whole life and faith.

And she lacked for what she believes she lost the contest. She lost her ministerial position following that. But she spoke about being busy now in her constituency, and plenty busy as a young mother of a young baby.

[17 : 29] Her priorities were absolutely right and that God will honor that, even though it was hugely sacrificial for her and laying aside the political mess that is happening around that just now.

And it seemed to be that God is honoring a God will honor that it may not be that she'll ever make it in politics but she'll be a great mum I'm sure and she'll be a great constituency MP.

And she maintains that integrity and relationship with Christ which must be incredibly difficult in that environment, because she was basically saying that most people of faith are scared to go into politics are fearful to criticizing that you just saying that's the reality.

And so it is great courage to have done what she did. So our worldview should shape center on God shapes our attitude to work. And then secondly very briefly, not only do a new perspective we also have a new power with which to take in a workplace.

And first Peter, again, very well known words to us that we've often referred to first Peter three and versus 13 to 17. Now who is there to harm you if you're jealous for what is good.

[18 : 47] Even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed, have no fear of them not be troubled but but in your hearts, honor Christ or set apart set apart Christ as Lord, as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asked you for the reason for the hope that is in you.

And it's better to do a gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you're slander those who value good behavior and Christ will be put to shame for it's better to suffer for doing good. If you should be, if that should be God's will then for for doing evil.

It's a setting apart of Christ in our hearts, which is the recognition that we have a new power within us to live as believers in a secular world in a secular environment.

And our Christian lives and this is obviously broader than simply faith and work bar Christian lives need to be grounded always into very important truths. One is that Christ must reign in our heart in your heart, and in mind, he must.

And that is the place of Lordship in our hearts, you know, as it says there that proof in your honor Christ is Lord in your hearts. Now that is that is a fundamental basic reality that only a walk with Christ out working the spiritual disciplines on a day to day basis enables us to do to love our neighbor to love our God and to love our neighbor.

[20 : 17] Yeah, thanksgiving joy need to be the mood music of our lives. And that only comes when we've set apart Christ as Lord nobody else can set apart Christ as Lord in your heart.

We can only do it ourselves. We need that intentionality in our lives, because that is what gives us the power to live for Christ in the workplace or in any difficult situation that grounded biblical worldview that moves beyond a worldview into relationship with Christ is is critical for us. And it is the Christ who nourishes us as we are in daily connection and in relationship with him. You know, as I mentioned to the kids on Sunday night that memory verse delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

It's a beautifully, crystal centric central reality for us as we delight in Christ that we will find our will being molded towards his and that rain of Christ in our hearts is the empowerment through the Holy Spirit to live for him.

Now, practically, that means that in a busy working week, Christ needs to come first, not your work. You can't just say, well, I'm too busy for Christ today, I've got a heavy schedule.

And the more the busier we are, the more we should be setting aside time to connect with Jesus, because the busier we are, the more we'll need him. And sometimes it will help us recognize that our busyness is is wrongly motivated.

[22 : 07] It will be, but it might be, and it helps us to grant grants us the perspective that we need to live in the right way, even if we can't be any less busy.

We still need to set aside time to allow Christ to reign in our hearts hugely significant. So Christ was reigning hearts. And therefore, I think also, we will then pray, specifically pray in general, but I think you will then pray specifically for your work as a critical activity of your Christian life, whatever that might not be paid employment as I say, maybe lots of different things that you're engaged in day to day, but you'll commit these things daily to the Lord.

And if you don't do it, I would really encourage you to pray about your work daily before you go to pray for your colleagues, the people you sit beside, the people who you're on zoom with your bosses, the people you can't stand, who are just a pain in the neck for a different reason, sometimes justified, sometimes not, I'm sure, but pray about these areas. Do you consider the need for the Holy Spirit in your workplace, in your heart, in your workplace, or is it or is work your area of competence, where you don't really feel it when you're competent, I've got a degree, I've got the qualifications, I don't need God in my workplace, I'm perfectly confident there, competent. As a wrong attitude, we may be intellectually or professionally competent, but we are not spiritually competent to outwork our lives in that context without Jesus Christ. I guarantee you'll pray for yourself and I pray for myself and I'll pray, and we may pray for our relationships, we may be very good at praying when we're in trouble generally, but can I encourage you to pray every single day for your work, and especially for your colleagues, especially that you, and you've heard me ad nauseam probably saying this, that you might be the only person in the world that ever prays for that person. You might be the only person that ever says anything before the throne of God for that individual.

So please remember the importance of praying, praying for your workplace, praying for compassion, praying for integrity, praying for forgiving spirit, for difficult colleagues, for ethics, for challenges, for respectfulness, not to gossip, all these kind of things to pray that someone said to me not that long ago when I took on the, I've got a small group of people praying for my chaplain say at Hibbs, and one of the people who's on one of the individuals who does that said to me, look what's really important is your presence there, as a believer is your presence. Now I'm not suggesting that it's you don't speak about your faith or you don't share your faith or whatever but as a Christian your presence is a hugely powerful reality in an unbelieving context, as we are close to Christ, because we should buy our lives and buy it, just who we are reflect him. So presence is important.

So, and we live with this new perspective, our worldview, and in the power of the spirit in the workplace, giving us courage and compassion and competence.

[25 : 53] And I do believe that opens up for us opportunities, how we act and react in the workplace gives us opportunities to give reason for the hope that is within us, whatever, without ever having to ram it down anyone's throat.

And that's true if we're retired, it's true if we're working at home, it's true if we are not employed, but are still working. So that's these are the two areas that we have a new power to enable us to live this way and we also have that perspective and a relationship with Christ and a worldview, which changes everything.

The last question. I would leave with you. Maybe particularly those who are gainfully employed is.

What would your work, what does your work reference look like. Your bosses to give you a reference. And what would it look like, or what hat maybe you know, but you've maybe had it in the past what does it look like.

It's very interesting that we're ordaining elders on Sunday, and one of the qualifications of elders ship is that they have. Isn't this interesting. A good reputation with outsiders, good reputation with outsiders.

[27 : 07] Because God cares about that. God cares about how we, what we look like. Without it, and it's a good reputation we're expected to have.

We're not expected to be Bible bashers and slamming things down people's throat is an objectionable and self righteous and judgmental. He causes sorry.

I think it's a special. It's a thing now that if I'm saying something that's not theologically right. It just kind of buzzes and I've got to stop saying it so.

But it's very important that we have a good reputation with outsiders. People, people on the live stream.

And God cares about a reputation with outsiders. So, if, if your boss was to give you a reference to borrow, or maybe your neighbor.

[28 : 08] Or maybe someone, you know that you meet interact with today today. What would that reference be. And it's maybe a challenge for all of us to consider significance of Christ in our lives and in our workplace. So, let's pray briefly about that father God we pray and ask that you would help us to understand more and more about you and about how we're to relate our lives and our faith to what we do day to day and may it become for us a deep pleasure to start each day thinking I can speak in a God's company and into God's throne and be in relationship with them and learn and grow and be fed and be helped by the sovereign King of Kings who wants so much to be hearing my voice and may that be a pleasure and a joy for us to know that he is our companion into the workplace.

He's a friend and he he wants to accompany us through his indwelling spirit to enable us to honor and glorify him. So help us as we think about these things in our day to day living for Jesus sake.

Amen.