

Thinking about Living and Working in the Public Eye

The basic idea we are exploring today is what is often called the Spiritual/Secular divide. Are there things that God is just not interested in? What in my day to day life really matters to God?

Work Rest and Play

- *How do you see your daily routine? Necessary Evil? An opportunity for Evangelism? A means to Glorify God? Time wasted when you could be doing better things?*

Take a look back at Genesis 1 & 2. In it we see a God given responsibility towards the world we live in.

- *Is there a connection between your daily life and work and what we see here of our stewardship of God's earth?*
- *Is this connection easier to see in some jobs than others?*
- *Are there particular ways in which we could be more involved in the stewardship of our world?*

Genesis 3 brings in the idea of labour. These are helpful definitions:

Work – express our creativity, a sense of purposive change that brings fulfilment

Labour – necessity of having to work, repetitive, maintain

Toil – Hard graft or struggle and pain involved in tasks

- *Which of these three is most part of your daily life?*
- *If as Christians, we understand the importance of the punishment of Genesis 3 as a reminder of our sinfulness, do we need to be more willing to undertake labour?*
- *How might we individually or as Christians labour effectively for God's kingdom?*

Keeping an Eye on Things

Increasingly, despite ever increasing legislation, we are shocked by work place malpractice again and again. It might be the high profile cases of bankers, bonuses and bogus payments, but it is seen in the every day of sick days, "lost" stationary, false expenses, work place lies.

Read some of the following passages: Amos 5: 12–15, Amos 8: 4-7, Jeremiah 7: 9–11, 1 Samuel 12: 1-5

- *The old adage goes: "breaking the law is fine; being caught breaking the law – well that's completely different!" In a godless society is it inevitable that people will try and get away with things?*
- *Do I work in such a way that I know I am accountable to God in everything I do?*
- *What should our reaction be when we work in situations that we know are not good?*
- *How can we helpfully effect change when we are being treated unfairly?*

The prophets spoke out against people and nations who did not honour God's way (e.g. Isaiah 19: 1-15, Ezekiel 26 – 28, Daniel 4).

- *What are ways in which the church should speak out today?*
- *What daily choices are open to us to take that indicate our belief that God is in control?*

A final perspective is brought by the life and ministry of Jesus. His life, death and resurrection taught us to look and see suffering in a new light, to see meaning through it, by not avoiding it.

- *How might we apply Christian thinking on suffering to our daily lives and work?*
- *In what ways are we/might we be called to suffer?*

Redeeming All things

Whatever the tensions and difficulties of our daily lives, God calls us to be engaged in this world. In this final set of questions, we will think about how we can try and make a difference to the world of work that so many experience.

The stories of Joseph or Daniel are really instructive here. They accepted the reality of their situation, they worked conscientiously and constructively, and they preserved their integrity in the way they worked and behaved as people.

- *What are the things that you find helpful in working conscientiously and constructively?*
- *What are the things that are most challenging to your integrity?*
- *What would enable you to be more effective in working in a way that is totally pleasing to God?*

In addition to the way we are ourselves, we are called to make a difference through prayer. Compare Jeremiah 29:7 with Psalm 137:8-9. Look also at Romans 13: 1-6 and 1 Timothy 2: 1-4.

- *When praying for our government or places of work, why is prayer so important for us who pray?*
- *What shapes the way we pray for our government and nations?*
- *How could we pray more effectively for our local businesses?*

It is important as well as praying to ensure that we have some clear perspectives. Look at 1 John 2: 15-17, 1 John 3:8, 1 John 5: 19-21. This wonderful letter ends with the imperative to keep from idols, as they are all around us, in many different forms.

- *Some of our western idols are easy to name: career, status, success & consumerism are all linked, but we could add in beauty, longevity, freedom, health, rights. Which of these are the ones you encounter most often?*
- *In what practical ways can these be effectively resisted?*
- *How do we build a future for our young people where these idols don't dominate?*