

# वेदश्लोक

Issue 1, 2020

Evangelical Perspectives on Mission and Ethics

WORK: JOB OR VOCATION?



**"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."**

*Colossians 3: 23-24 (ESV)*

**Drishtikone** means perspective or viewpoint in Hindi. The magazine seeks to provide a space in which Christians can share their perspectives and points of view on wholistic mission in India.

Our Vision is that **Drishtikone** will motivate change in readers. The experiences of development practitioners, theologians, grassroot workers and others demonstrating God's love in a practical way, will influence and encourage Christians to join the struggle for peace and justice in this country.

**Drishtikone** seeks to present a Biblical perspective on social issues and provide readers with information and models of engagement in wholistic concerns. It is a forum for evangelical reflection and dialogue on development issues in India.

**Drishtikone** is published three times a year by EFICOR to mobilise Christian reflection and action. Financial contributions from readers are welcome to support EFICOR in its efforts to influence the mind towards action.

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## Letters to the Editor...



Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending *Mental Health – Issue 3, 2019*. I have read it thoroughly and find very impressive. All the writers write from their pain and heartfelt suffering. It touched me very much.

Thank you and God bless you!  
Rev. Dr. LH. Jacky Simte  
Superintendent  
Manipur, AGEI

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sending *Drishtikone* magazine. Very few magazines like *Drishtikone* have noteworthy facts and mission provoking directives.

Prayers and Best wishes!  
Cornel Nathan  
New Airport Road, Kannur Post  
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Dear Editor,

Thanks for the magazine. I appreciate your efforts as well as that of the whole team in putting this together.

A statement that touched my heart (from Sengmei's story) on page 16:

“God has since then heard my humble cry and brought several people into my life, who I have been able to walk alongside through the eye of their storms. I have been actively involved in counselling and mentoring not as a strong, sorted individual, but as a fellow sufferer, a broken jar of clay, from the cracks of which the light of the Lord shines forth”.

It inspired me; I used to consider my life as a broken jar of clay, a useless vessel only good enough to be kept in a corner of a shelf until the precious light of my Savior Jesus Christ began to shine through its cracks. Now He is using me to share this light with those who are in anguish, just like this dear Sister:

Regards,  
Asha  
New Delhi

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## Editorial...

Work has been viewed as a way of earning livelihood for many, and it plays a crucial role in our lives. The Bible makes it clear that work matters to God. No matter what our profession or occupation - whether we are a homemaker, a bus driver, a teacher, an artist, an engineer or working in any other profession - God cares about our work. Each of us has been called to do certain things - it is part of human existence.

We often pursue work apart from a sense of calling from God and thus work often becomes a necessary drudgery to earn money. Our attitude and approach to all work should reflect an appreciation of God's unique calling and purpose in our lives. Our vocation and calling should lead us to see work not as an occupation that gives us income but as a vocation that expresses who God has uniquely created us to be. While some of us may have jobs, all of us have a vocation: namely, to love, serve, and follow God. This primary vocation can transform how we see our everyday jobs. Sometimes even the most boring and repetitive jobs can become an arena for service if we are open to hearing the voice of God - guiding and showing us how to use our gifts right where we work. As said by *Parker Palmer in Your Life Speak (Wiley, 2000)*, "Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear." There are many possible jobs that God might call each of us to do, what is important is that we work mindfully at the work with a sense of purpose.

This issue of Drishtikone seeks to highlight the crucial role played by each of us in doing our work, and the importance of working with a sense of purpose and meaning. Once we have that vision we will not just be performing or doing our roles but will be striving for excellence in the work that we do. We believe and pray that this issue of the magazine will help us develop the right attitude to whatever work that we do - whether it involves menial, physical or high level thinking skills. With the challenges of printing and posting via mails, the electronic version of this issue of Drishtikone has been brought to you.

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# Work: Job or Vocation?

**Rev. Kennedy Dhanabalan**

## Introduction

A cleaner was cleaning the wall of the hallway to the ICU of a hospital. He was meticulously going over the wall again and again, ensuring that unseen dust particles were wiped clean. When he was asked why he was cleaning like that even though the boss was not watching him, he replied, “I do it because the lives of the people in this ICU also depend on me and God is watching over me from above.” For some people cleaning is a mean job but for him it is important and he finds joy in it. What made him think differently about this “work”?

## Definition of Work, Job and Vocation

The word “Work” is defined by Cambridge Dictionary as “something we do that takes an effort” or something created as a result of an effort (mental or physical).<sup>1</sup> Oxford Dictionary also describes it in similar words as, “Activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result”<sup>2</sup>.

Everyone in this world does work. But some people work towards the satisfaction of themselves, some think of satisfying others, and some (the wealthiest) avoid taking part because their survival is assured by someone else, whom Tom Morin calls as “proxied existence.”<sup>3</sup>

Work is carried out by a person to fulfil core human needs. Blustein segregated these needs into three categories.<sup>4</sup>

1. Need for survival and power: Working is integral to our survival. In addition, working has the potential to enhance one’s power in the world, via material acquisition as well as the attainment of status and prestige.
2. Need for social connection: Work provides extensive opportunities for relationships, including relationships that are supportive as well as relationships that are problematic.

3. Need for self-determination: Work provides opportunities to engage in activities that are interesting, stimulating, and meaningful, thereby fostering a sense of self-determination. In addition, self-determination can be attained via extrinsically motivating tasks that are useful in helping people attain goals that they value.

As we analyse the above statement one can understand that the motivation for work for the first point is sustainability and power. Work enables people to meet their basic needs like food, shelter, and educating their children. It also allows individuals to accumulate money for a time when they may be unable to work and helps individuals to attain status and prestige, which is inward looking.

The motivation for the second and third is having a meaning or purpose of life which can be called vocation or calling. Calling when used as a noun refers to a command, request and invitation to go somewhere or do something. The literal meaning of the term supports the idea that a calling comes from an external source, and its historic use emphasises embracing and pursuing a calling as a duty to society and the common good.<sup>5</sup> “A job is a vocation only if someone else calls you to do it and you do it for them rather than yourself. And so our work can be a calling only if it is reimagined as a mission of service to something beyond merely our own interests.”<sup>6</sup>

## View of work through the history

“Hebrew belief system viewed ‘work’ as a ‘curse devised by God explicitly to punish the disobedience and ingratitude of Adam and Eve’<sup>7</sup>”. Like the Hebrews, Greeks also believed that work was a curse. “According to Tilgher (1930), the Greek word for work was *ponos*, taken from the Latin *poena*, which meant sorrow.<sup>8</sup> Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle made it clear that the purpose for which the majority of men laboured was, ‘In order that the minority, the elite, might engage in pure exercises of the mind, art, philosophy and

<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/work-noun>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lexico.com/definition/work>

<sup>3</sup> <https://workfeelsgood.com/world-of-work/definition/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199758791.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199758791-e-001>

<sup>5</sup> Bryan Dik and Ryan Duffy: *Make Your Job a Calling* (Templeton Press: West Conshohocken) 2012. Kindle version Loc 187

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Keller: *Every Good Endeavour* (Hodder&Stroughton Ltd: London) 2012 p.20 (kindle version)

<sup>7</sup> Michael Rose. *Reworking the work ethic: Economic values and socio-cultural politics*. (Free Association Press: London) 1985 p 28

<sup>8</sup> Michael Rose. *Reworking the work ethic: Economic values and socio-cultural politics*. (Free Association Press: London) 1985 p 29

<sup>9</sup> DaRayl D. Davis: *Economic Secrets of the New Retirement Environment* (Xlibris: 2009) p.88



politics (Tilgher, page 5).”<sup>9</sup> He also viewed that “... the ability to live without having to work - was a primary qualification for a genuinely worthwhile life.”<sup>10</sup> So work was for lower class people to do and the cultural norms allowed free men to pursue warfare, large-scale commerce and the arts like architecture or sculpturing.

Stoic philosophy attributed a positive value to work. Work was considered to be a natural human occupation that did not exclude one from living a virtuous and good life. Work was compatible with the moral order and a part of it.<sup>11</sup>

The Romans adopted much of their belief system from the culture of the Greeks and they also held manual labour in low regard (Lipset, 1990). But Edelstein believes that the

reshaping of attitudes toward manual work during the Hellenistic Age (323 BC – 31 BC) resulted in a general theory of calling or vocation. This view established and prepared the way for the Christian concept of calling. Everyone, even the lowliest person, has a calling to fulfill if he chooses one (Edelstein 1966, 77-78).

However, the Christian concept of calling developed from the view of Judaism, which saw their God as one who worked for six days creating the world. God was not an idle one but one who works and wants human beings also to work, as he/she was not destined for idleness. The word ‘rule’ mentioned in Genesis 1:26 coupled with the understanding of being made in God’s image implies that we are called to be the stewards over the rest of the creation in his place as His caretakers i.e. to work as God does. This is strengthened in the Christian belief system when Jesus said “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working” (John 5:17). The teachings of Jesus and St. Paul reinforce a respect for work by stating that idleness is the enemy of the soul, and that he who does not

work, neither shall they eat. They looked upon labour as providing independence, as a pathway to humility, and as a means for providing charity to others (Eph 4: 28). St. Augustine and St. Benedict founded the monastic movement on the principle and the morality of work as a means to combat sin and work as honourable in the image of God.

In the Catholic tradition, the monasteries also gave importance to work. “The monks living under St. Benedict’s rule in 529 was run to strict written guidelines governing times and types of work that are still in use today. (The abbot Bede) remained so humble ... took pleasure in threshing and winnowing, milking the ewes

and cows, and employed himself in the bake house the garden, the kitchen, and in all the other labours of the monastery.”<sup>12</sup>

But with Martin Luther (in 1527) profession, vocation and calling became synonymous. “He swept away the idea of the superiority of one type of work over another. As long as work is done in a spirit of obedience to God, every variety of work has equal

spiritual dignity and each is the service to God on earth.” Commenting on Luke 5:1-11, Luther states the following:

There stand God’s work and command; they apply to us as well as to St. Peter. With them God orders us to work and to do whatever our calling requires. Therefore he who looks to his calling and continues to work diligently, even if good fortune is against him and success fails to come for a while, is bound to fare well in the end. For God cannot do otherwise... Therefore no one should become disgruntled or unwilling, even if, like Peter, he does fish in vain for

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<sup>9</sup> DaRayl D. Davis: Economic Secrets of the New Retirement Environment (Xlibris: 2009) p.88

<sup>10</sup> Keller, *ibid*, p.46 quote 38

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Applebaum. The Concept of Work: Ancient, Medieval and Modern. (State University of New York Press: Albany) 1992, p.91

<sup>12</sup> Os Guinness: The Call (Thomas Nelson: Nashville), 2018, p.33.

a night.<sup>13</sup>

Commenting on I Peter 4: 8-11 and Psalms 128:2, Luther further states:

The apostle Peter wants to remind everyone in particular to attend to his occupation or office, and in discharging it, faithfully to do and perform whatever is entrusted to and demanded of him. For, as Scripture teaches in many

places, no work is nobler than obedience to the calling and work God has assigned to each one<sup>14</sup>.

**“... work is not primarily a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is or it should be the full expression of the worker’s faculties ... the medium in which he offers himself to God.”**

Your work is a very sacred matter. God delights in it, and through it wants to bestow His blessing on you. This praise of work should be inscribed on all tools, on the forehead and face that sweat from toiling... the pious, who fear the Lord, labour with a ready and cheerful heart; for they know God’s command and will. Thus, a pious farmer sees this verse written on his wagon and plow, a cobbler sees it on his leather and awl, a labourer sees it on wood and iron: “Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.”

Through these sentences Luther gives a message to all mankind that man should work to fulfil himself. It was a message supporting individualism and upholding the existing social order and made the calling a creatively enjoyable aspect of work.

So what is the Christian understanding of work? Dorothy Sayers sums it up saying, “... work is not primarily a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is or it should be the full expression of the worker’s faculties ... the medium in which he offers himself to God.”<sup>14</sup> Guinness says it as, “Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.”<sup>15</sup>

So moving from understanding the word “Work” and viewing historically how this understanding has evolved let us now look at the applicability of this in our daily life.

## Attitude towards the work

Among Christians, there is a misunderstanding that some callings are higher than the others. Looking into the history, one can see that many great rabbis earned their living by working in fields, woodcutting, masonry etc. But some rabbis argued that studying the Torah was superior to physical work. “This attitude comes from Ecclesiasticus, a Book of Wisdom, based on the teaching of Jesus, the

son of Sirach written between 200-180 B.C. “The wisdom of the scribe cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise” (Ecclesiasticus 38: 24-39:11).<sup>16</sup>

“In the Middle Ages, the concept of the three orders – namely orators (clergy), bellatores (warriors/nobles) and laboratores (workers) was promulgated by bishops such as Adelbero and Gerard. Even though they were accorded a place on the society, the laboratores were the lowest order on the scale.”<sup>17</sup> This has resulted in the understanding amongst Christians that missionaries, pastors and elders are a higher calling and this thought has carried on through the centuries till now.

So is there a higher calling? Genesis 12:1-3 describes, “That all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Through Israel all nations will be blessed. So who is Israel? Sometimes with a parochial understanding some think that through the priests and Levites the whole nation will be blessed. That is wrong. The calling is for the whole nation. That means even a butcher living in Israel is called to be part of the mission.

Some people interpret I Timothy 5:17,18 and consider a pastoral job as more valuable compared to other professions. “A more accurate reading is that elders who do their work well are worthy of greater honour compared to other elders who do their work merely adequately.”<sup>18</sup> Saying that the emphasis here is that each one has to recognise that they are working along with the Lord in His mission of establishing His Kingdom. Even the Lord calls Nebuchadnezzar (a king) His Servant (Jeremiah 27: 6) and calls Cyrus the anointed one (Isaiah 45:1) in fulfilling His

<sup>13</sup> Herbert Applebaum. The Concept of Work: Ancient, Medieval and Modern. (State University of New York Press: Albany) 1992, p.322.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy Keller: Every Good Endeavour (Hodder&Stroughton Ltd: London) 2012 page 39 (kindle version)

<sup>15</sup> Os Guinness: The Call (Thomas Nelson: Nashville) 2018 p 4

<sup>16</sup> Applebaum, ibid, p.181

<sup>17</sup> Applebaum, ibid, p.581

<sup>18</sup> Calling: A Biblical Perspective (Theology of work). (Templeton Press: West Conshohocken) 2012 LOC 373 Kindle version

mission. So our attitude towards the work we do should be “Am I glorifying God in all that I do and how will my work help in furthering the Kingdom of God?”

### How do we Work?

After recognising that the calling God has given is the same for all, it is important to see how as a faithful servant of the Lord one should work.

a. Work with joy and passion to glorify God: Webster’s dictionary defines joy as “a condition or feeling of high pleasure or delight; happiness or gladness.” Joy springs from within and is an internal experience. Happiness is caused by external circumstances or experiences. Joy at work stems from the understanding that the Lord Himself is at work, and we have been commissioned to work, and so we work with joy in the heart knowing that we are working in the name of the Lord (Col 3:17).

In his blog Charlie Self<sup>19</sup> writes about five principles that will help one infuse more joy into the work:

1. Perspective: Scripture and the inner work of the Spirit will help us “see” our work differently, as we add value, participate in the economy and glorify God (Eph. 3:14-21).
2. Obedience: Character develops in challenging circumstances. As we treat people well and refuse to compromise our ethics, Christ is glorified (Gal. 5:16- 26).
3. Wisdom: The Holy Spirit helps us solve difficult problems and graciously serve “challenging” people as well (Prov. 2:1-11).
4. Empowerment: Being led by the Spirit is not confined to church meetings (Acts 16:6-10)!
5. Reconciliation: As we do our work well, treat people with love and seek opportunities to share Christ, we are partners with God in His ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:14-6:2).

Whether we labour in factories or fields, in executive suites or classrooms, as stay-at-home parents or volunteers for charities and missions — we are “full-time ministers” for Christ. Because God is the source of our joy, knowing our work pleases the Lord will fuel inner satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> Emerge as candles of joy for all seasons – at homes, churches and workstations.

b. Sincerity, honesty and integrity in work: Paul writes to Colossians in 3:23, “Whatever you do, work

at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.” By saying these words, Paul is encouraging each one to work sincerely. But someone said, “Sincerity is good, but truth is needed with it”. One has to make him/herself accountable to God and do the work with honesty and integrity. Integrity also involves ethics. Wright says, Genesis 18:19 states, that ...(when) God elected Abraham, the ethical demand to walk in the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice was clearly mentioned.<sup>21</sup>

c. Perfection/excellence in the work: Guinness encourages everyone to imitate Christ to work towards perfection and quotes Oswald Chambers statement “My utmost for his highest.”<sup>22</sup> In the Master Chef competition, the judges before tasting the dishes analyse the way it is presented appealing to the eyes. They look for perfection from all angles. The Lord when he created things found it was good. He works towards perfection. He expects each one of us as Ambassadors of Christ to work towards perfection, that whoever sees the good works that is being done will glorify the Father in heaven (Matthew 5: 16).

### Conclusion:

While there is a responsibility for each of us to work with an attitude of serving the Lord, it is also important for the organisation to provide a safe and conducive environment for the person to work in fulfilling their vocation or calling.

“A joy filled workplace gives people the freedom to use their talents and skills for the benefit of the society, without being crushed or controlled by autocratic supervisors.”<sup>23</sup> “There is no fun like work.” That was the motto of Dr. Charles Mayo, founder of the famous medical clinic. The key to joy at work is the personal freedom to take actions and make decisions using individual skill and talents.<sup>24</sup>

The responsibility of making the calling a joyous one to serve the Lord remains with both the worker and the management. Let us work joyfully, fulfilling the mandate the Lord has given to us and making our life a meaningful one.

<sup>21</sup> <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f595/e8348bf8c7641c88c7a8f8d36d0ec85fc594.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Os Guinness: The Call (Thomas Nelson: Nashville) 2018 p 121

<sup>23</sup> Dennis W. Bakke: Joy at Work (PVG: Seattle) 2005, p11

<sup>24</sup> Bakke, *ibid*, p.65

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<sup>19</sup> <https://blog.acton.org/archives/76610-how-to-find-joy-and-meaning-in-your-work.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://blog.acton.org/archives/76610-how-to-find-joy-and-meaning-in-your-work.html>



# Is our Work a Vocation or a Job?

**Dr. Shantanu Dutta**

The word vocation is most commonly used in the Roman Catholic Church. Till recently and even now in common usage, if someone “had a vocation,” it meant that the person concerned was trained

to be a priest or a brother or in case of women prepare to be a nun. The word had rather a narrow usage. Men and women in robes had a vocation, others had work. Although the catechism of the church would theologially

say that both lay people and clerics have a vocation, the popular understanding is not this. Almost all religious orders have staff titled “vocation promoters” whose job is to look out for potential recruits for their Order by putting out advertisements in parish magazines and personal visits to churches. The job is not unlike that of representatives of foreign universities holding seminars in the admission time, hoping to find students who will seek admission. When the Catholic Church say that vocations are increasing or decreasing, what it is really talking about are trends in the numbers of people signing up to be priests and nuns.

The word vocation is seldom heard in the protestant church. But if Catholics have “vocation,” Protestants have “ministry.” Vocation has Latin roots; Ministry has Greek roots. Jesus provided the pattern for Christian ministry - He came, not to receive service, but to give it (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 13:1-17 ). Vocation derived from the Latin word for calling is not an invention of the Catholic Church though. It too has Biblical roots - for example, the calling of Samuel by God to be a prophet in 1 Samuel 3:2-10 or Jesus calling out Mathew the tax collector in Matthew 9 and beckoning him to come and follow Him as His disciple.

Just as the Catholics have segregated out priests and nuns as those with a “special vocation” from lay people, Protestants have classified people as those who have a “full time ministry” versus those who do not. Again, Protestant theologians like their Catholic counterparts will hasten to clarify that just as there is no full-time vocation, there is

also no full-time ministry and that all people are equally called to serve God. Nevertheless, in regular practice those in full time ministry are higher up the social hierarchy like their Catholic equivalents in their vestments and robes.

**“To speak of “vocation” or “calling” is to suggest that my life is a response to something beyond myself. Christians believe this “something beyond me” is God.”**

And so, what is work? Rev. Kennedy has addressed the subject exhaustively. In day to day usage, work is what you do to earn a living and pay your bills.

When people ask, “What (work) do you do?” They want to know what the source of your income is. What is your job? The answer can be various - one can be a shopkeeper, a stockbroker, nurse, physiotherapist, college professor, pastor, etc. Typically, though not always, “work” has a start date and an end date, typically called retirement. The word “vocation” is deeper though. The concept of vocation goes deeper than any one aspect of life, such as work or a job of which it is just one part. The concept of vocation rests on the belief that life is about more than me. To speak of “vocation” or “calling” is to suggest that my life is a response to something beyond myself. Christians believe this “something beyond me” is God.

But even people outside of this tradition often sense a call to serve others, to create beauty, and to do good in the world. “Vocation” is based on the idea that each individual person has unique strengths and gifts with which they can make a positive contribution to the good of the community. Each of us has interests and passions that can propel us in directions of service and creativity. Vocation also includes my relationships, causes and work as a volunteer outside of my place of employment. We are called to be good parents, good siblings, good spouses or good friends. Our jobs are not necessarily the most important aspect of our vocation. In India, particularly, it is customary to study and then take up jobs and work that provide security and a steady income rather than pursue work that is more in resonance with our vocation. This dissonance leads to work and studies being seen as a burden and drudgery rather than a harbinger of joy and the conundrum.

In an ideal world, the work that one takes up will be in sync with one's vocation and all will be well. Unfortunately, this does not always happen. For instance, one of my friends has the vocation to be a classical musician - a Hindustani Classical Musician adept at playing the Sitar. After the gift was spotted, he took special training with a Pandit and had dreams of that being his life work. But he soon noticed that examples like Ravi Shankar notwithstanding, it is not easy to make a living playing the Sitar. Discouraged, he appeared for some competitive exams and joined a nationalised bank as a clerk to make

ends meet. Now every Monday, he wakes up to the classic "Monday morning blues," takes deep breaths and mutters "Thank God, it is Friday" every weekend and cherishes the next two days playing the Sitar in local concerts or for his family and friends or just by himself. Monday to Friday he "works" and feels miserable but Saturday and Sunday, he exercises his vocation and is supremely happy. He is acutely aware of the schizophrenic existence that he leads.

Many people are aware of this schizophrenia and try to correct it. The Bollywood film "Swades" has the actor Shahrukh Khan portray a NASA scientist who returns to India in his native village. Using his skills and appropriate technology, he helped set up a small hydro electric plant near his village that provides uninterrupted electricity throwing open many other doors that will lead to other forms of development. Originally on leave from NASA and on a visit, Shahrukh eventually resigns and settles down in the village. In the electrification of his remote village, he finds joy and fulfilment for himself and opens up a channel of blessing for others. That is the blossoming of vocation and the merging of work and vocation, making work no longer a chore but a charm. The magazine "Better India" regularly publishes numerous stories of people trying to recalibrate the needle like the instance of Sanmitra Pandharpur and Amrita Chaudhury a software engineer couple based in the US, who at the peak of their careers opted out of the rat race and chose to relocate back to India and reinvent themselves

as organic farmers - a subject completely foreign to both of them. Their story portray a very successful couple recalling their early challenges starting off -but the daily effort of running an ethical business as organic farming is both expensive as well as time consuming. But Sanmitra and Amrita have no regrets.

If aligning our work with our larger vocation is so fulfilling, why do so many of us choose to live fractured lives with work overshadowing everything and the larger map of

vocation barely visible? There are numerous magazines on work and succeeding at work – Forbes, Inc, Harvard Business Review, Sloan Management Review and of course the website LinkedIn, just to name a few. Not a single magazine dealing with vocation comes to mind though there might be a few books, mostly by religious authors. We hear often enough about work life balance, but if our vocation and life were truly aligned, the former may possibly become irrelevant.

**“Everyone knows what work is but mention “vocation” and there is often a hazy blur prompting a search for the dictionary. What should be greater is today dwarfed and shrunk. What should become lesser, bloated and gluttonous. And yet for our own sake as well as the larger good, it is important for us to rediscover and relive the rich tapestry of our vocation.”**

I suppose that it is the paradigm of a fallen world that things are so inverted. Everyone knows what work is but mention “vocation” and there is often a hazy blur prompting a search for the dictionary. What should be greater is today dwarfed and shrunk. What should become lesser, bloated and gluttonous. And yet for our own sake as well as the larger good, it is important for us to rediscover and relive the rich tapestry of our vocation. It may not be incorrect to say that we will experience the abundant life when depending on God we have discovered and explored our unique vocation and begun living it too.

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# Making Work part of Vocation ordained by God

**Mr. David Raju**

## Why Work?

Work is an integral part of human life. As mentioned by Rev. Kennedy in the Cover Story article, most men and women are engaged in some kind of work, either as a home maker, or in agriculture, or in corporates. Many work in their own businesses, while others in educational institutions, or government services or religious establishments. Many work as social workers with NGOs. The only exceptions are infants and kids. But there are also those without employment, and the habitually lazy.

What is your perspective on work?

## Purpose of Work

In the Cover Story article, Rev. Kennedy has done a good analysis of the need to work quoting from Blustein's study of the need for human beings to do work. Need for survival, power, social connection, self-determination. It is true that different people work for different reasons. Some of us work for a comfortable life, and some out of compulsion for survival. Others work for status, or as a passion or hobby. Some work to fulfil their day to day needs, while some work to provide for future needs. The people in Research and Development work at meeting the changing needs of future generations, not current requirements.

However, what do you think is the purpose of work? It is what makes work meaningful and even satisfying.

There is an old story of a traveler who came upon three people working with stone. Curious to know what they were doing, the traveller asked the first worker, "What are you doing?" Without hesitation, the first worker replied, "I am a stone cutter, cutting stones."

The traveler came to the second worker and asked the same question. The second worker thought for a moment and explained, "I'm a stone cutter working to earn money to support my family."

The traveller went to the third worker and asked,

"What are you doing?" Stopping for a moment, the worker stared at the stone in his hand. Then, slowly turning to the traveler he said, "I'm helping to build a cathedral!"

Three working men at the same site, performing the same task, gave three different responses. Each had a different perspective on what he was working towards.

The Creator God has a purpose for each of us. He created each one of us as unique and planned a life that He wants us to live. That includes how we need to live, where we should live, what should we study, whom we should marry and also what kind of work we need to do.

My understanding is that God has a specific career for me and you. Therefore, He has also given us a suitable personality for that career. Every individual is born with certain interests, talents and capabilities. Each of us is given inherent aptitudes. And, over time, we also acquire specialised competencies.

Our natural competencies or aptitudes and acquired competencies should be in synergy. Otherwise, there will be conflict. So, we need to develop competencies that are best suited for our given careers.

So, the need for work should be derived from our Creator's choice of work for us. When we choose our work/career in alignment with God's choice of work for us, our work will be guided by vision not just for survival, power or for status. We will find meaning in what we are doing on a daily basis or in our career as well.

## Finding Our Career

Since each of us is given a career, it is important to find what it means for us. This begins with choosing the appropriate field of studies such as engineering, medicine, agriculture, and theological courses.

So, while choosing the course of study, one should keep in mind one's natural preferences. Each of our personalities is naturally attracted to certain kinds of work, and that is where our interest lies. We now have scientific ways of assessing

personality attributes, which are the fundamentals of our personality.

Studies become a natural attraction and an enjoyable activity when you choose a field of study which suits your personality. You don't need to push yourself. You will enjoy the lectures because they are enriching for you. You look forward to college because you will learn something interesting to you. Lectures will become interesting and exams a learning tool to improve your knowledge.

A career choice based on knowledge and interest becomes a purpose driven career. You will not just be working for survival or living, but work becomes a passion and a lifestyle. You do not need to stress yourself. Career becomes part of life. When you know that God called you to be His ambassador whether through working in church or a Christian organisation or working in a corporate setup, you are there as God's ambassador. God is your ultimate employer. The church or a Christian organisation or a corporate office becomes God's vineyard. So, it is very important to understand the purpose for which you were made. Choose a suitable course of study. Based on that, choose your career. This becomes crucial to living a purpose driven life. If you can identify your career by yourself, well and good, otherwise take the help of career counsellors in finding the right career.

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It is also important to note that in God's view there is no secular or sacred work. When God gives a particular career, it is ordained for you by God. We often differentiate work as secular or sacred, fulltime or part time. But in God's view everything is ordained by God. As mentioned by Rev. Kennedy, whether we labour in factories or fields, in executive suites or classrooms, as stay-at-home parents or volunteers for charities and missions - we are "full-time ministers" for Christ. A career given by God is for life and we are all fulltime workers in God's vineyard.

### **Work: Job and Vocation**

Having clarified the perspective on work and the importance of finding a God given career, we now need to ensure that we stay in the right career. Do not make a hasty decision to switch from your given career to a different career, whether for money, status, or compulsion. You will find yourself like a fish out of water. You will struggle, face endless conflicts, and may end up against a wall, which is frustrating in life.

So, make every effort to find your given career. When you find and follow your given career path, you will enjoy doing the work related to that career. You will find it interesting. It will be easier for you to pay full attention to your work and avoid major mistakes. When you keep doing the things

correctly, you will achieve excellence. When you excel in your work, you will be rewarded suitably. Ultimately, you will be happy and satisfied in your work and career. What an organisation it will be when its employees are happy and excelling in their work! Such organisations will succeed in their vision and mission.

On the other hand, if you are in the wrong career, you will keep punishing yourself. You will find reasons for not going to work. Your interest level will drop. You will keep committing mistakes and be subjected to criticism from your superiors. At end of the day, you will not be a happy employee. Soon you will find yourself like "a fish out of water".

It is said that: if you just do your work with your hands alone like duty – you will complete the work, If you add your mind to your hands while doing your work – you will excel and produce better results, But if you add your heart to your hands and mind – you will produce innovations in your work.

But it all starts with finding what God has planned for you. When God calls you to do particular work whether as a pastor or as social worker or as a teacher or as a home maker, whatever it may be, you need to put your body, mind and soul in to that. Then, you will not only excel in your daily work, but will be able to make a difference to your family, your organisation or church and society at large.

### **Make work your vocation**

When you find a career which is meant for you, the work involved will never be boring or a burden. It will become the most desirable part of your life and you will enjoy that work. Your work will become purpose driven not merely a drudgery. Please note that when God calls you for some specific work, He will not just call you but He will also help you to complete that. Let us consider what happened in the life of Moses. God called Moses to go to Egypt to facilitate the redemption of Israelites from bondage. But Moses was hesitant to accept the job. Finally, Moses agreed to do the job, in the process God equipped Moses by providing assistance to Aaron. God also empowered Moses by granting him the power to perform miracles. God also promised His presence. When we choose a career according to God's choice, God equips and empowers us in the work that we do. The original purpose of your Creator would then be fulfilled in your life. Your work will become integrated into your lifestyle. That is when your work becomes your vocation.

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# My Work Experiences

(Conversing with Mr. Naveen Siromoni)

**Q 1. You had a successful career in one of the largest media houses in India. Could you tell us when and how did you begin your career in the arts?**

*I am delighted to share my real-life experiences that have panned out to be a success. I will share some of the small yet significant experiences, with the hope that it may be replicated and be a learning experience especially for the youth.*

*It all started with a conversation between my father and me, as I had just completed class 12 and was all ready to prepare for a college education. My father was keen that I join the Bishops' College and pursue Biblical/Theological studies. He felt that it was a good way to learn and be of service to people. My parents were very actively involved in the social service sector be it linked to the church or a secular institution. I assured my father that I believed I could do good to humanity in a number of ways and not just by joining the church only.*

*My ambition in life at that time was fragile and was vacillating between my childhood fantasy of being a train driver to my new found love for animals for which being a vet was essential. Though honestly, I did not actually have a clue of what I was going to do next nor was I even inclined to even think in that direction.*

**Q 2. What are the kinds of work that you do in the workplace?**

*I did not have any clue that my conversation with my father would have an influence in shaping my thoughts later on in life. 15 years later, my designation reads 'Art Director' and I was working with the country's largest media house. I would design many kinds of stuff for the company and enjoyed doing it since I loved my job. I have a big team and unlimited resources at my disposal. This is when I had a choice. I could use this big opportunity to further my ambitions, earn more or use this to make a difference.*

**Q 3. Tell us your work experiences. How was your relationship with your colleagues?**

*I had a large social circle of young people and over a period of time, I met a number of young people who shared about their life and told me of the trials that they*

*faced. Some of them had addiction problems, problems with the family, economic problems and the list went on.*

*This was when I decided to use my skill and position to see if I could actually make a difference.*

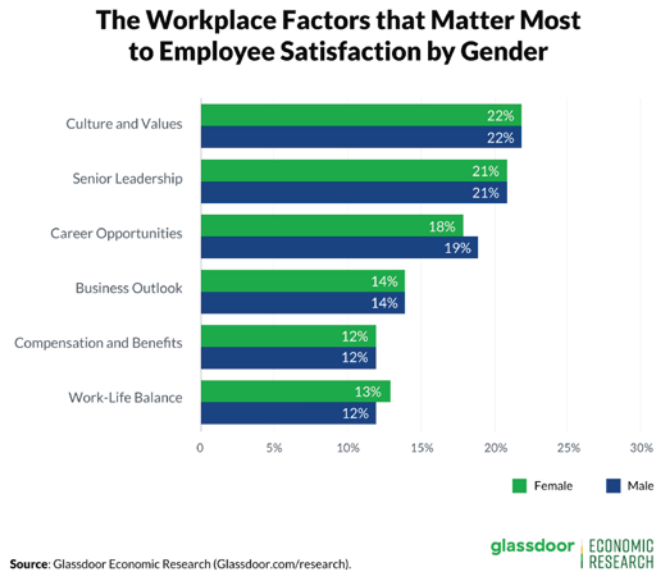
*To start with, I met a young boy who wanted to do something for himself but was unable to do so as he did not have the money to finish his college education and had dropped out. Let's call him Rahul (name changed to maintain confidentiality). Seeing his enthusiasm to learn, I decided to teach him the basic software for design which is Photoshop. I used to go to his home for an hour after work and have classes for him. This went on for a month and soon he had picked up well. So when there was a vacancy in my company, I asked him to apply. He had to go through a standard process of an interview and test. He managed to get through and got a starting level job. In time, he moved up and soon was the sole bread earner for the family and doing well. He moved on to a better paying job and today is at a good position at work.*

*This journey taught me a lot, and this is when I felt that all it takes is to be able to share a skill and that can make a difference. Yes, my job as Art Director was a job but it did give me the platform from which I could make it a vocation. In time, I was able to give opportunities to six more people and the belief that I had years ago, that one can do good and be of service in almost any way. The idea of "Each one, teach one" was an old one. It had benefited a lot of people and now a new idea called "Each one, teach one a skill" is in. Anyone can make a difference in other people's lives by having a willing heart to teach others. This will have a huge impact - in ways beyond what we can imagine.*

(These real-life experiences have been shared by Mr. Naveen Siromoni to Joan. Naveen has worked with India Today Group as Art Director. He is currently a creative entrepreneur with his own design studio and an online seafood business.

He can be reached at [naveensiromoni@gmail.com](mailto:naveensiromoni@gmail.com))

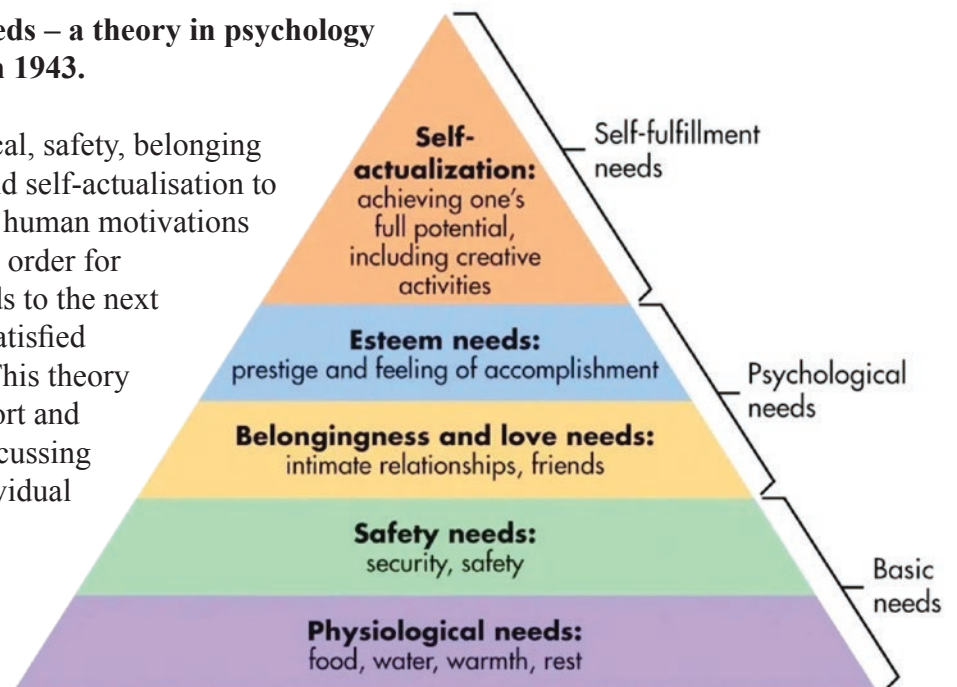
# FACTS



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**This is Maslow's hierarchy of needs – a theory in psychology proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943.**

Maslow used the terms physiological, safety, belonging and love, esteem or social needs and self-actualisation to describe the pattern through which human motivations generally move. This means that in order for motivation to arise from basic needs to the next level of need, each stage must be satisfied within the individual themselves. This theory is a main base in knowing how effort and motivation are correlated when discussing human behaviour. Each of the individual levels contain a certain amount of internal sensation that must be met in order for an individual to move on to pursue higher pursuits as described in the pyramid.



# FACTS



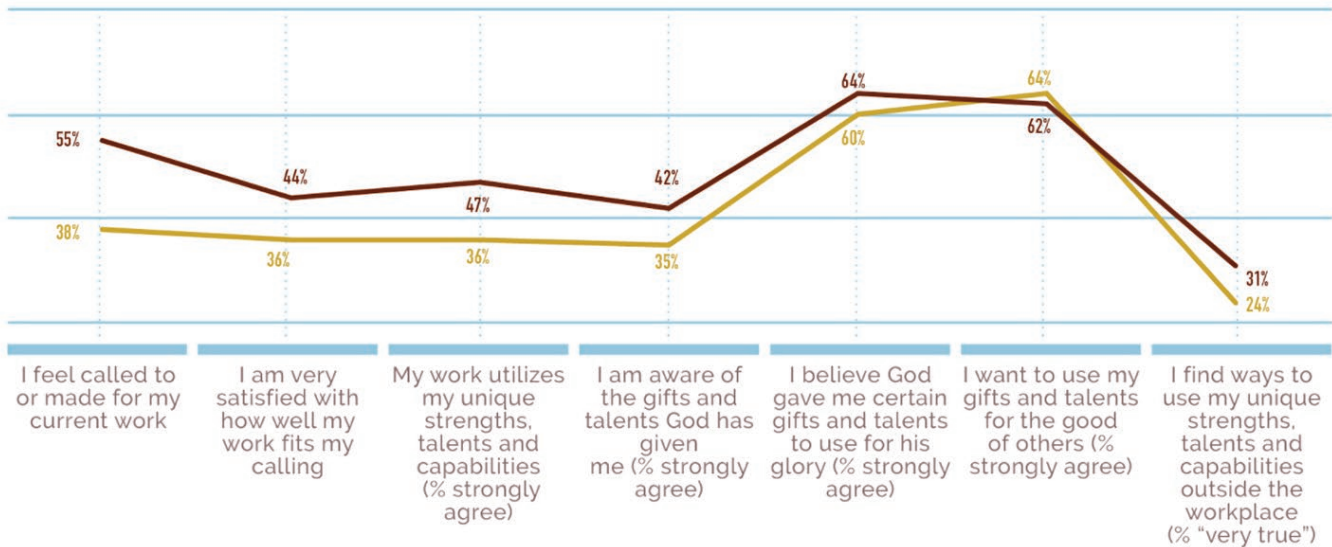
Salespeople who view their work as a Calling rated their Mental Health the Highest



## ATTITUDES TOWARD VOCATION, BY RELATIONSHIP / FAMILY STATUS

Barna

◆ Fathers ◆ Mothers



n=765 employed U.S. Christians.

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calls Abraham, he promises to make him a **nation** (*Gen.12:2*). In the New Testament, Jesus says that, on the confession of Peter about the identity of Jesus as the Messiah, he will build the **Church** (*Matt.16:18*) – it should be noted that in the New Testament, this word is never used for a denomination or a building, but to the community of the called-out people of God – the emphasis is again that of the community. It is only within the encouragement and accountability of a community that our creativity achieves its zenith.

*Thirdly*, we see God placing Adam in the garden of Eden and commanding him to *work* it and to *take care of* it (*Gen.2:15*). The corresponding Hebrew words are ‘*avad* and *shamar*. The first word can also refer to the service and worship of God; the second can also refer to the keeping of God’s commandments! It should therefore be clear that in the Jewish mind, work and worship were continuous with each other and not contradictory to each other. It should come as no surprise that a number of major achievements in music, art, literature, science etc. are by Jews quite disproportionate to their population! We tend to explain this away by saying that it was because of God’s blessing upon them without realising that their worldview was determined by the Word of God and so they considered their commitment to work as a calling and not just as a means of livelihood. *Genesis 4:20-22* indicate that the people in early times pursued diverse vocations such as raising livestock, playing musical instruments as well as industries involving bronze and iron. In *Exodus 31:1-5*, we read that God gifted Bezalel with skills in working on different building materials which were useful in constructing the Tabernacle in the desert. We also see that God led King Solomon to artisans of various types in constructing the Temple full details of which are given in *1 Kings 7*. I would discourage us from concluding that these skills were meant for constructing the Tabernacle/Temple and so draw the unfortunate separation of the secular and sacred.

Fourthly, we need to understand that the good news, in the words of the Lord Jesus, was that the Kingdom (or Rule) of God was near (*Matt.4:17; Mk.1:14,15*). But this was neither a new idea nor a New Testament idea. It was God’s will that God would rule over his creation only through his human creatures. It was not very different from the role of the Viceroy who ruled over British colonies in this part of the world before the 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 and who ruled them on behalf of the king or queen who ruled from London.

According to *Gen.1:26,28* we are vice-regents – kings and queens – representing God’s interest over his creation on his behalf. The prayer that Jesus taught us includes a line: “Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (*Matt.6:10*). Do we realise that we are the answer to our own prayer? Our work therefore is part of our call to bring kingdom values to our work in God’s created world. In *Exodus 19:5,6* the further role of priest/priestess is added to us which requires us to represent creation to God in intercession. The ‘royal-priesthood’ role - repeated in *Rev.1:5,6;5:9,10* - includes our seeking God’s face to find his help to make our daily chores meaningful and fulfilling. A video in Marathi went viral last year in which I saw 5 sweeper women praying before starting the work of sweeping the streets of Solapur, Maharashtra. I was deeply moved and remember telling God, “Lord, these women may be considered as belonging to the lower castes in our country, but they are queens in your sight!” This also shows that in our own country, the caste system which categorises work as ‘sacred’ and ‘menial’ does not and should not apply in God’s world! Regardless of the status our work enjoys in our fallen world-system of values, it is honourable and meaningful in the sight of God.

*Fifthly*, we need to understand that our rebellion against God has its negative repercussions on the world of work. In *Gen.3:17-19*, God reminds man his work (which must have been enjoyable as we saw in *Gen.2:15*) now becomes toil; he would put 100 units of energy into his job and he will get only 50 units of fruit; the rest will go as waste as ‘thorns and thistles’ and the ‘sweat of [his] brow’; how relevant and realistic the Scriptures are to our world of work! This is where our work needs to see our redemptive contribution as we make work relevant even to our colleagues who could be from different faiths. The Bible also gives us the basis for human relations in the area of work. When you begin to treat our bosses, colleagues, and subordinates as those made in the image of God, we can bring out the best in them and thus salvage work from some of the evil effects of human rebellion.

I had the privilege of being part of the first batch of MTech students of the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras. At our convocation in July 1966, we received our degrees from the hands of Sir C V Raman, Nobel-laureate in physics. In his lecture, he made a statement that impressed me: “You engineers and technologists will be tempted to prostitute your knowledge for the service of human

greed particularly in the service of the military-industrial complex.” The Biblical aspect underlying that statement dawned on me after many years (!): in a fallen world, every forward step in knowledge offers a moral choice to use that knowledge for good or ill; this is presumably one aspect of the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil’, where we followers of Jesus with his enabling, can hope to channel that knowledge only for purposes that benefit humankind.

*Sixthly*, we should raise the all-important question of why we should struggle through this world of work with all the difficulties that confront us both at the ethical level as well as in the context of the negative circumstances under which we labour. The Bible which begins with *Genesis 1,2* ends with *Revelation 21,22*! [I may add parenthetically that we have a strong theology of redemption but a weak theology of creation!] In the opening verses of *Rev.21:1,2*, we note that the New Jerusalem, which is the Church, comes down to be stewards of God’s new creation; it may come as a surprise to most Christians that there will be work in the new heavens and earth. *Rev.22:5* says that the redeemed people of God will **reign** for ever; the **rule** and **dominion** that began in *Gen.1:26,28* will culminate and continue in the new creation! The reality of the future without the crippling effects of satan and sin provide the motivation for working in the present creation.

The early Church did not make a distinction between the secular and sacred; in the first recorded dispute in the Church relating to partiality in the distribution of food to widows, what Peter says in *Acts 6:2,4* has unfortunately been mistranslated in virtually all versions. In both verses, the word *ministry* [Gk. *diakonia*] is used: for *ministry at tables* (v.2) and *ministry of the Word* (v.4). Because of the non-use of the word *ministry* in v.2 in all translations, the word has come to be used in our conversation today as referring only to Christian work. In his book *The Call*, Os Guinness, quoting the 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian Justin, says that the wooden ploughs made by Joseph and Jesus in their carpentry shop were still in good use in the second century! {Please do not say that they were of good quality only because Jesus was the Son of God!} I am sure Paul, Priscilla and Aquila made good tents; they did not make tent-making an excuse for preaching the ‘gospel’; if they had made tents of a poor quality, their disciples would also have made lousy tents!

*Finally*, the all-important question – what is the historic evidence that the future outlined above is true? *Romans 8:18-23* provide the answer.

Paul picks up the groaning of a woman in labour (*Gen.3:16a*) and applies it to (i) the present creation, and (ii) to ourselves. What is creation waiting for? She is waiting for our final redemption because when we are finally redeemed, creation will also be redeemed. What are we waiting for? - the redemption (resurrection) of our *bodies*! It will be most appropriate to conclude this paper by some extremely important aspects of the glorified physical resurrection of our bodies which will have all the qualities of the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus (*Phil.3:20,21; I Cor.15:51-57*). But what were the physical qualities of the resurrected body of Jesus? Some detective work may be in order contrasting the resurrection of Lazarus (*John 11:38-44*) against the resurrection of Jesus (*Matt.28:1-6; John 20:3-8*). The stone at the mouth of Lazarus’ grave has to be moved away **before** Jesus could command Lazarus to come out of the grave. **After** Lazarus comes out, the grave-clothes that bound him from head-to-toe have to be removed so that he can move about. The two physical evidences of the stone that was at the mouth of Jesus’ grave and the grave clothes around Jesus’ body are in stark contrast to those in the case of Lazarus. Jesus comes out of his grave **before** the stone is rolled away by the angel; the grave clothes around the body of Jesus and the scarf around his head are **undisturbed and in the same position** as the body was that John sees the clothes and believes (*John 20:8*). It is very important to note that Jesus was not a ghost. Today, mathematical physics can demonstrate that a physical body of higher dimensions will not obstruct or be obstructed by bodies of lower dimensions. But what is the implication of the resurrection of Jesus for our world of work? Paul gives a one-verse answer at the end of his chapter on the resurrection (*I Cor.15:58*) to the questions of vanity and meaninglessness raised by the whole book of *Ecclesiastes* (written presumably by Solomon in his declining years); “your work for the Lord – remember that in the early Church there was no distinction between secular and full-time work – is not in vain”. We also note that the gates of the city, the New Jerusalem, will never be shut and there will be no night (*Rev.21:25*). The requirement in the Old Testament was that the gates were to be shut during war, on Sabbaths and at night. What does this mean? In the new creation, we will be working continually without any break! Hallelujah!!

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# The Desk, the Doer and the Destiny

**Ms. Gracy H. David**

India has been a land of flourishing poets, writers, philosophers, painters, singers and the like. Yet after many decades, we find ourselves running the mad rat race of life. We choose to ignore the unique gifting and personality of each person and we shove them all into the same mould of a 'regular-secured' job! The sad reality in India is that we rarely view work as a vocation or calling today. We view it only as a means of livelihood.

A person who was questioned about why he didn't pursue his dream, shrugged his shoulder and replied, 'Life happened!' And thus in Hindi many people call this '*Kismet*'- blaming it all on fate. Ranting about corrupt authorities and incompetent colleagues, we somehow grow so accustomed to these realities that nothing about it seems to be out of place. We conveniently choose to blame the system when we feel the tug of our conscience. And our discussion comes to no specific conclusion.

Most Christians believe that work is a curse and therefore a result of the Fall. We imagine the Garden of Eden as a place of 'forever vacation' without the need for work. On the contrary, the Bible says that God created Adam with a purpose and place before the Fall. Yet we tend to reject it in our lives. Adam was put in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Gen 2:15). Work is part of God's original purpose.

As Christians we are 'called' to do the same - 'work it and take care of it'. All of us - whether we work in corporates, service sector, hospitality, administration, education, civil services, pastoral work, sports, performances, arts or even as a homemaker taking care of kids and/or elderly - we are 'called'. And this calling cannot be discounted. If we apply this command to our work, we are to take care to ensure our work is productive. Quoting a senior civil servant, 'The idea is that we must do so in respect of nature for its flourishing and not exploiting it in a commercial sense.' We are given no lesser task than what Adam was given. And we are to take it that way!

**“Ordinary work, which is what most of us do, most of the time, is ordained by God every bit as much as is the extraordinary.”**

The Fall affected not only humans but also the whole of creation (Rom 8:22). Work designed by God in Genesis 2:15, becomes toil in Genesis 3:18-19. Thorns, thistles and sweat of the brow became a part of the product of the work. Work became 'painful toil.' Hence, the work put in didn't have 100% returns anymore. Work became drudgery - it was reduced to hard labour and eventually became 'boring/uninteresting'.

The challenge here is not to blame it all on the Fall. Neither are we to blame it on fate (as our contemporaries do) and continue with our lives where we are less affected by today's happenings. Time and again, God recruits His chosen in His redemption story. God is redeeming his creation, and despite His omnipotence, He chooses to work in partnership with mortal men and women. We see countless people throughout the Bible fulfilling the purpose God had placed on their hearts. Some were called with an audible voice, some found themselves in the midst of circumstances. Nonetheless, they all co-operated in God's mission, without the possible knowledge that their stories were part of God's grand destiny.

*“Ordinary work, which is what most of us do, most of the time, is ordained by God every bit as much as is the extraordinary.” - Elisabeth Elliot*

More often than we realise, the ideologies and beliefs of one's faith has a lot of impact on our workplace. In India, Vishwakarma Jayanti is celebrated for Vishwakarma, a Hindu god considered to be a divine architect. This festival is celebrated not only by the engineering and architectural community but by artisans, craftsmen, mechanics, smiths, welders, industrial workers, factory workers and others. It involves puja (worship) of work instruments and machines. Many people have a flawed view of matter and work. They tend to either deify or idolise work in two wrong types of ways. Either they worship instruments of work, but do not conscientiously commit themselves to work, or they talk about work itself being worship and end up as workaholics.

In the Bible we find Joseph, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel and his friends were all recruited in 'secular' jobs, in what seemed at first dreary and uninteresting. They faithfully did their jobs and won the favour of pagan kings. They had more crummy work environments than what we work under. They went through unfair and unjust circumstances. And yet, we see their lives shine through all the darkness around them. Therefore, even our simple (daily life) decisions need to be seen as a part of God's kingdom.

It is we who draw this distinction between secular and sacred. God chose Bezalel and Oholiab (Exo 31) and filled them with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts. They used them to glorify God and to worship Him. May we ask him for skill, ability, knowledge and even the Spirit of God to help us in our job! 2 Cor 3:5 says that even our adequacy and our competence come from God. The Bible does not segregate the secular and the sacred. All creation is God's and all the work we do is unto him. The Latin phrase 'Coram Deo' implies that complete life is to be lived in the presence of, and under the authority of, and to the glory of God. Thus, Christians should refrain from making any secular-sacred distinction.

We also find that the casual 'chalta hai' (anything goes) attitude has crept into our work ethics. We either rush through our task without worrying about the quality or we are lazy procrastinators. If so, we are wasting the position given by God. How much effort and time are we putting in our task? We need to be renewed in our minds (Rom 12:2). All work - whether it brings monetary benefits or not, was intended for the fulfilment of the worker as to the society at large. The proportion of 6 days of work to a day of sabbath rest points to the fact that work and worship are continuous with each other. Have we ever considered our work - quality and timeliness, as an offering to God? As an act of worship to Him?

Often times, we derive a person's identity or value out of what he/she does rather than what he/she is. Hence the drive to 'do' something is more urgent than to 'be.' We see God pointing time and again, that 'Doing comes out of your Being' and not the other way around. Even the name of the God of the Bible is 'I AM' not 'I Do'! What we are in our

**“This job has been given to me to do. Therefore, it is a gift. Therefore, it is an offering I make to God. Therefore, it is to be done gladly, if it is done for Him. Here, not somewhere else, I may learn God's way. In this job, not in some other, God looks for faithfulness.”**

assigned service is more important to God than what we do. A helpful and kind colleague helping a sick friend, not only presents the Christ-like character, but also adds benefit to the organisation by completing the task of 2 people. Such a person is an asset for the workplace. In a culture where stealing credit and toxic competition is common, such a person

becomes a breath of fresh air. The quality of work will be the best, if it springs out of pleasure of doing the task, not the focus of doing it to get credit. Eric Liddell says about his running capability, "I believe that God made me for a purpose, But He also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure." It's not the joy of rewards that shall inspire us anymore, but the sheer fulfilment in doing the task for the Lord.

Likewise, a stay-at-home mom feels inferior than her counterpart who does a marketplace job. We devalue the immense investment a mother has on her kids. It is an eternal investment, the monetary benefits of which are beyond evaluation. Every hour which seems unworthy on the surface, is valued by God. Sometimes, we are asked to do jobs which might not be of our liking or preference. Yet it is ours to find out "Does God want me here?" If the answer is yes, our job is to be faithful. It might be difficult for the moment, but we can be reminded - "for whom am I doing this job?" It will help us to shift the perspective from our mundane to His glorious purpose (1 Cor. 10:31).

Our workplace raises a lot of questions which have an ethical bearing - how do I react to the competitive colleague? How do I respect an unjust boss? How do I fight corruption? How do I work with a non-co-operative team? How do I react when my work is not given any/due credit? What should I do when my boss expects to be flattered? All of these questions have no easy answers, but it helps to remind ourselves - 'for whom am I doing this? and Why?'

*“This job has been given to me to do. Therefore, it is a gift. Therefore, it is an offering I make to God. Therefore, it is to be done gladly if it is done for Him. Here, not somewhere else, I may learn God's way. In this job, not in some other, God looks for faithfulness.” - Elisabeth Elliot*

*(Ms. Gracy H. David is an Architect, she is currently working as an Assistant professor in Indore. She can be reached at [gracydavidarch@gmail.com](mailto:gracydavidarch@gmail.com))*



# Seeds of Change

Floods have been devastating the communities living in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts of Assam. Both these districts are criss-crossed by several rivers including the mighty Brahmaputra. Floods that strike almost every year leave vast patches of agricultural lands inundated, thus destroying the standing summer crops. Given that the summer crop is the main survival option and recurring disasters strike the local farmers, they face severe food insecurity. Most of the time, they do not have seeds to plant for the next year. Added to that, is the risk of taking loans from local moneylenders in order to buy seeds, and then not being able to repay when disaster strikes again. Over a period of time, this vicious cycle of disaster and economic loss has resulted in chronic poverty in the region.

The only way out from this vicious cycle is to create a buffer against disaster wiping out the main summer crop and also a less exploitative support system for when farmers need to purchase seeds or when they face other emergencies. With this objective, Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) - an NGO based in Delhi, worked to establish seed banks in the flood affected villages of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji.

## The Beginning

The project focused on supporting lean season crops that could bring additional income to the community, before or after monsoon. The goal of the project is to strengthen the food security of vulnerable communities by creating additional livelihood options. The project was started during September 2007 and established 30 seed banks in 60 villages covering 5,000 families. The project, supported by ECHO and Welthungerhilfe (formerly German Agro Action), was launched in villages worst affected by flood. Most of the families covered under the project depend on monsoon crops as the main source of earning. The seed banks support was for paddy and mustard that are taken up and harvested between September to May thus avoiding the monsoon and floods. This allowed farmers to use the lean seasons productively besides ensuring livelihood security. Conscious efforts were made under the project not to change the traditional methods of cultivations under practice. Seeds that grew under local conditions were provided to ensure their adaptability.

## Democratic Design

A representative village committee manages the seed banks. The committee is selected through a democratic process. A village meeting attended by a member from each household selects the committee. Once elected, the committee



Photo: A seed bank

manages the day to day operation of the banks. To ensure representation of women in the seed bank management committee, women membership was made

mandatory. They were selected from different SHGs operational in the region, which in a way brings in certain management skills to the committee also.

A seed bank is constructed usually with a size of 8 feet x 10 feet and placed five feet above the ground. They are constructed with local materials like bamboo and timber. A seed bank of this size can store 2000 kg of paddy and mustard seeds. The village committee circulates a notification calling for applications for seed loans in the local language. The circular carries instructions on processes to obtain application forms and key dates like the closing of applications. The amount of seed given to a farmer depends on the size of landholding. There are certain rules that need to be followed. For every kilogram of seed borrowed, two kilograms of seeds have to be returned. But seed banks committees are independent to decide on their specific rate of return. In case some cannot repay in seed, they have the option of paying back in cash. In adverse situation where crops have failed or the yield has not been up to the mark, rules are relaxed. Farmers in such situations repay in affordable installments or the amount to be repaid is reduced. Defaulting farmers are barred from loans. However, there have been very few instances of defaulters. Money generated from farmers paying back in cash is deposited in a bank account in the name of the village committee. This fund is used to give out loans to those who need money urgently at a very minimal interest rate of two per cent.

The project has helped communities to get a good yield from crops grown during the lean season, thereby ensuring increased livelihood security. Seed banks have brought down farmers' reliance on high interest loans for buying seeds.

*(Adapted from the book 'Turning the Tide: Good Practices in Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction', published by EFICOR and Sphere India, 2010, pp. 79-81)*

# Books on our Desk

## With the Poor

By Dr. Bryant L. Myers, Nirmaan Society Publication, 2018

**Ms. Ann Lex**

'With the Poor' is a remarkable book which gives the reader a comprehensive picture of development from a Christian point of view. Bryant Myers covers creation, Jesus' resurrection and our eternal life in New Jerusalem to understanding ourselves, who we are in Christ, how God sees the poor and non-poor and finally how to implement transformational change. This book highlights the experiences of the poor from different parts of the world. The author points out that Christians must first get a clearer understanding of Christianity, who God is and what His responsibility is for us here on earth.

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When we start working with the poor, we often start by learning about the community and its problems; the book teaches the importance of getting to know the poor first, developing relationships and then understanding the community and its problems. "Transformation in relationship brings transformation in communities." The poor and non-poor are caught up in a 'web of lies' which controls people's minds and makes them stagnant in their growth. We cannot and should not work focusing only on the physical and social aspects of poverty but also focus on the mental and more importantly the spiritual aspects of poverty as well. Christ cares for us all and has provided redemption not only for the poor but also for the non-poor who do not realise that they require it. The author elaborates on the consequences for the poor when they accept and understand God's story as theirs, they will be freed from all the lies they have been told by the evil one and by the non-poor. Working with both the poor and non-poor is therefore essential.

The book is beautifully written from an evangelical perspective, and includes the views of various other authors as well. With examples from the Bible, the author brilliantly compares the lives of the poor and non-poor, issues faced by the poor and the root cause of such issues.



A Biblical perspective helps recognise the potential the poor have within themselves and how holistic workers must possess the fruits of the spirit. The book reveals hard truths such as the non-poor deceiving the poor by claiming to do good for the betterment of society but actually having hidden selfish intentions. A lot of times "our worldview influences what we believe about how people are transformed." As holistic workers we must not do what organisations and governments do. "Those who are good neighbors to the poor are more effective than problem-solvers." The author couldn't stress more on the importance of communication. The book also speaks about working with pressure from donors, as transformational work is a slow process. The author does not fail to mention that holistic workers must not judge the work already done by the local church because God will make lasting

spiritual work happen through the local church. Each section of the book is well structured and broken down into categories, helping the reader understand the main aspects to poverty, the community's worldview, cultural values and ending with examples of various programmes for transformation. This book is rich in content and has covered almost all aspects one needs to know when working with the poor. It is a book that is meant to be studied in depth and not just read. The questions at the end of each section and the summaries are a good way to reflect on what was studied and how it can be related to our personal lives. The author very thoughtfully puts down the synonyms of important words next to the paragraph. The concept of tables and figures made the book even simpler to comprehend. The book is also recommended to those interested in getting a basic idea about Christianity and the poor.

*(Reviewed by Ms. Ann Alex. She can be reached at [annalex93@gmail.com](mailto:annalex93@gmail.com))*

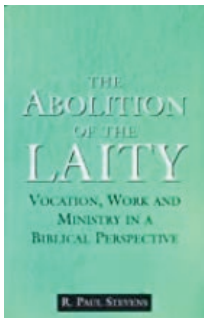
*"With the Poor" may be purchased from [www.amazon.in](http://www.amazon.in). Kindle version is also available.*

## The Abolition of the Laity

By R. Paul Stevens

(Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999)

**Mr. Rahul Kumar Chauhan**



The existence of the distinction between the 'clergy' and the 'laity' has been predominant throughout the history of the church and continues to remain as a strong dominant system in the church even today. In this book, R. Paul Stevens provides a detailed study based on his life story and experience in developing a theology for work and vocation. Paul agrees, disagrees and argues with several theologians and historians throughout

the book. While some would critique this book from many viewpoints, schools of thought and theologies, Paul Stevens' writing still remains convincing as the main ingredient of his argument is rooted in God's word and not just any mere human traditions.

*Firstly*, Paul argues that all the people of God are one people and there should not be any hierarchical system. Some may lean towards supporting clericalism, others may be anti-clerical or some may have a neutral view; Paul suggests that all belong to 'One Community' and are part of God's Kingdom. *Secondly*, Paul brings out the biblical definition of the word 'Call, Called and Calling' then connects it with the life of every believer, their work and vocation. Paul diminishes the idea of full-time and part-time ministry and further suggests that the "Call of God that comes to every believer (Eph-4:1) embraces all of life: work, family, neighbourhood, politics and congregation." *Thirdly*, Paul suggests that mission of God is for all and affects all areas of people's lives. Therefore, ministry cannot be reduced or defined by the place, a person's function, designation, title and class distinction. Ministry cannot be delegated to clergy alone as all are called to do God's work as servant leaders of Christ. Finally, Paul suggests that the church must live in harmony and in love as the people of God.

This book is a great resource for all who desire a clear explanation about how God's heart and mission are relevant and applicable for all the areas of our lives, whether we are working in a full-time job, Church ministry or daily work and family. This book also includes case studies and guide at the end of each chapter, which can be used for further group study and discussion.

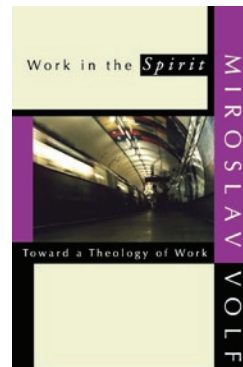
(Mr. Rahul Kumar Chauhan works as a Lecturer in Practical Theology at Doon Bible College, Dehradun. He can be reached at [chauhan.rahul05@gmail.com](mailto:chauhan.rahul05@gmail.com))

## Work in the Spirit

by Miroslav Volf

Published by Wipf & Stock Publishers; Reprint edition (27 April 2001)

**Ms. Deepthi Ammu Tarapatla**



In his book, Miroslav Volf undertakes to address the need for a theological reflection on work and contributes much in enabling Christians to see meaning and purpose to work. For the first time such an attempt is made from a pneumatological perspective. He believes that establishing a theological framework serves the purpose of interpreting, evaluating and facilitating the transformation of human work.

He remarks that the significance of human work goes far beyond providing human beings with necessary sustenance. Fundamentally, work gives the primary meaning of 'gainful employment' or earning, leaving out household chores and voluntary work as work. A theology of work critically reflects on the reality of human work and participates in its own way in reshaping the world of work in the light of the promised new creation. Volf argues in favor of understanding work as co-operation with God. He firmly puts forth that a pneumatological theory of work is possible. He justifies this approach based on the theology of charisms - power granted by the Holy Spirit signifying the various activities human beings do in order to satisfy their own needs and the needs of the fellow creatures. Thus all work should be viewed from the perspective of the operation of God's Spirit. According to Volf, charisma is not just a call but an inspiration and a gifting to accomplish the task.

The author exhorts the understanding of 'mundane' work as 'work in the Spirit' as the Spirit of God calls and gifts people to work in active participation of the eschatological transformation of the world. He reiterates that the work of non-Christians has in principle the same ultimate significance as the work of Christians as they too will contribute to the future new creation, though the new creation will not incorporate everything found in the present creation. It is enlightening to read Volf's interpretation of work as one's privilege to do the kind of work for which the person has been gifted by God's Spirit, and work as being God's call and the community's good.

(Mrs. Deepthi Ammu Tarapatla is a Bank officer with the State Bank of India in Andhra Pradesh. She can be reached at [deepthidoctoral2018@gmail.com](mailto:deepthidoctoral2018@gmail.com))



# Responding to the Call - Helping the Needy

## Pastor Samson Masih

Masih ki Prathna Bhavan (Christ's Prayer Home) was started in 2014 at Mandi Govind Garah, District Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab. The vision and mission of the church is to serve those in need by providing both their physical and spiritual needs through the love of Christ. It started out of a passion to do social work among people. The Pastor, Pastor Samson Masih, had a strong desire to serve the needy especially those who could not afford to have basic things like children's school fees, clean drinking water, food, etc. He believes that one must meet physical needs in order to bring in other aspects of development. This motivated him to do development work in and around the community in his area. He said, "I felt called to help the people and started raising support for them from my family members. They also supported me so that I in turn can help people." Having this motivation, he started the home church. The church has about 20 families as of now - he visits them regularly.

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In 2013, the pastor came in contact with EFICOR and he was invited to attend a workshop on Integral Mission. The workshop inspired him to do wholistic ministry and as a result, the church has done various social development works as listed below:

- **Provide children's school fees** - On seeing that many poor children drop out due to inability to pay school fees, the church identified the really needy children and helped them pay for their school tuition fees.
- **Distribute chlorine to purify water** - The church distributed chlorine for free. This was given out to about 10-15 needy families daily so that they can purify water.
- **Provide free clothing and food to the poor** - This was started in 2014 and the church distributed food, clothes and other necessary items to the poor in different parts of Punjab. During Easter and Christmas programmes, they send food to leprosy homes.
- **Support for Medical camps** - During August 2019, when there was flood all over Punjab, there was a Christian society organising medical camp. The church also supported by donating some amount for the medical camp.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic spreads across the globe, it has affected many people in this part of India. During the lockdown, the church actively responded to the crisis by

helping the poor and vulnerable. The Pastor mobilised local resources so that he can provide food and other essentials to the community.



Photo: Pastor Samson Masih

He said,

"There were many people who were affected during the lockdown. We could collect an amount of Rs. 4800 from our Church members and we use it to provide food needs of the community. I also took loan of Rs. 17000 from some friends. My wife also donated her gold earring and we got around Rs. 15000 for this. With this amount, we could help two pastors and some other needy families."

The community cooperated in development work done by the Masih ki Prathna Bhavan. They were very happy to receive the support and felt inspired on seeing the dedication of the Pastor and church members. However, there were also challenges faced by the church as they have not received support from anywhere else. The Pastor has made a lot of personal sacrifices in order to reach out to the needy communities. Despite all these challenges, the church has been able to successfully work along with the community for their development.

As said by Pastor Samson, "Our Lord purchased us with His blood, in the same way, we should show His love and kindness to our brothers/sisters, and help expand the Lord's kingdom by developing our nation. Let us not deposit in banks, instead start depositing or giving it out for the Lord's kingdom and glory." The church has truly lived out the faith which motivated them to do the good work of helping the needy.

*(Pastor Samson Masih is the pastor of Masih ki Prathna Bhavan in Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab. He can be reached at samsonmasih7@gmail.com)*



# Job or Vocation: Exploring the Scriptures

**Mr. Ajoy Varghese**

Some of us are always asking this important question and never satisfied with the answers, while others seem to never ask or care! Some of us believe that what we are doing with our employers is “just a job” and that our actual vocation is always external to our jobs. Others consider themselves fortunate to be working for “a Christian organisation” or a local church and therefore assume that they have found their vocation doing “God’s work”.

This is a good reason for exploring the Scriptures to understand more.

## 1. The Origins:

Read Genesis 1: 27-31. In the Bible’s creation story, we see God gives humans a job to do as soon as they are created.

### Reflect

- As soon as God creates humans, he appears to put them to work. Why?
- Is there any separation of job and vocation in God’s first commission to humans?
- Along with the job itself, does our vocation include paying attention to the context of our work and our co-workers?

## 2. The Change in Work:

Read Genesis 3 to understand how our relationship to work changed

### Reflect

- Why did God curse the earth when it had not done anything wrong?
- What would you imagine as the immediate consequences on the relationship between job and vocation as a result of human disobedience?
- How does the introduction of fear, shame and dissatisfaction affect our ability to fulfil our vocation?

## 3. False Paradigms

Read Genesis 11:1-9 to understand how humans used work to compensate for their separation from God.

### Reflect

- Having one language and one speech could have made



the people united. But what foundational questions did they fail to ask?

- Despite their ability to be successful and their willingness to work, why did God confuse the peoples’ languages?
- Despite their hardworking ethic, what restlessness do you most notice?
- Can this restlessness be reversed through the children of faith in this world? (Gen 12:1-3)

## 4. Diversity of Jobs, Talents, Gifts

Read the following passages to learn about the multiplicity of jobs, interests and capabilities that God has given to humans (Exodus 35:20-35; 1 Kings 4:20-34; Eccl 9:10; Eph 4: 11-12; Acts 18:3; 2 Thes 3:8; Mark 6:3)

### Reflect:

- Does the diversity of work in our diverse world tell us something about how we can make free choices in the jobs we choose?
- How can we reflect our calling/vocation in the jobs we have?
- Is it possible to always have a job which helps us fulfil our vocation? Is it necessary?

## 5. Faith and Vocation:

Read the following verses to understand God’s sovereign wisdom in placing us in different stations of life (1 Thes 4:9-12; Acts 17: 26-27; Col 3:23-24)

### Reflect:

- If we trust God’s wisdom in locationing us, can we fulfill our vocation wherever we are?
- Can we be confident that we are fulfilling our vocation as long as people are seeking after God because of our work?
- Does a successful vocation always have to be spectacular and attention grabbing?

The above Scriptures will prepare us for answering this fundamental question. And we are most likely to discover increasing clarity as we go about doing whatever God has given us to do on a day to day basis along with the people that God has given to us in our families, work places, neighbourhoods and churches.

*(Mr. Ajoy Varghese works for International Justice Mission as Vice President - South Asia Programmes. He can be reached at [dajoyv@yahoo.com](mailto:dajoyv@yahoo.com))*

# IDEAS FOR ACTION

## AS INDIVIDUALS

- Reflect on the Bible and its relevance for all areas of life and do not limit it to the so-called religious area.
- Consider seriously God's command to the first human pair to be stewards of creation and think through how you could develop a Biblical attitude in your own areas of work.
- The best way to truly help a community or serve others is to seek to do your job well - do your part well.
- If you have an opportunity, try something different or learn something new, by all means be open to it. As you work, remember that your primary "calling" is to please Him in everything you do (Ephesians 6:5).

## AS FAMILIES

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- If one of the parents is a stay-at-home mother/father, encourage her/him to consider that home-making is an important call from God and they should not consider their work at home as inferior to employment in the workplace.
- Bring up children with the correct values regarding their subject of study. Teach them not to always evaluate academics in terms of financial return or in terms of career.
- Provide career guidance to children on the same basis; let them seek the will of God considering their gifting/interests as well as the needs in society that God may want them to meet through their work contribution.

## AS A CHURCH

- Study what the Scriptures reveal in regards to the privilege and responsibility of humans to be part of the flourishing of creation and fellow-humans.
- Learn to consider personal salvation not just for personal enjoyment of God but as the means of being salt and light in God's world.
- Learn to view the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading and prayer not as ends in themselves but as means to discern God's mind in developing faithfulness in the workplace.
- Train the so-called laity to witness to their fellow-workers in the marketplace as to how Christ makes work meaningful and encourage them to put their faith in Christ.
- Develop discipleship programmes that will emphasise the responsibility Christians have in the marketplace.

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