

DISCOVERING GOD'S *missional* *purpose* FOR WORK.

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Ob in Büros, Fabriken, Schulen, Krankenhäusern oder jedem anderen Arbeitsplatz, Gläubige haben die Möglichkeit, den großen Missionsauftrag Gottes zu leben, indem sie die Liebe Christi durch Wort und Tat teilen.

Genau wie Jesus seine Jünger entsandte, um das Evangelium zu verbreiten, ist jeder Christ aufgefordert, Gottes Mission in seinem täglichen Leben zu erfüllen, was insbesondere den Arbeitsplatz beinhaltet, an dem die meisten unserer wachen Stunden verbracht werden.

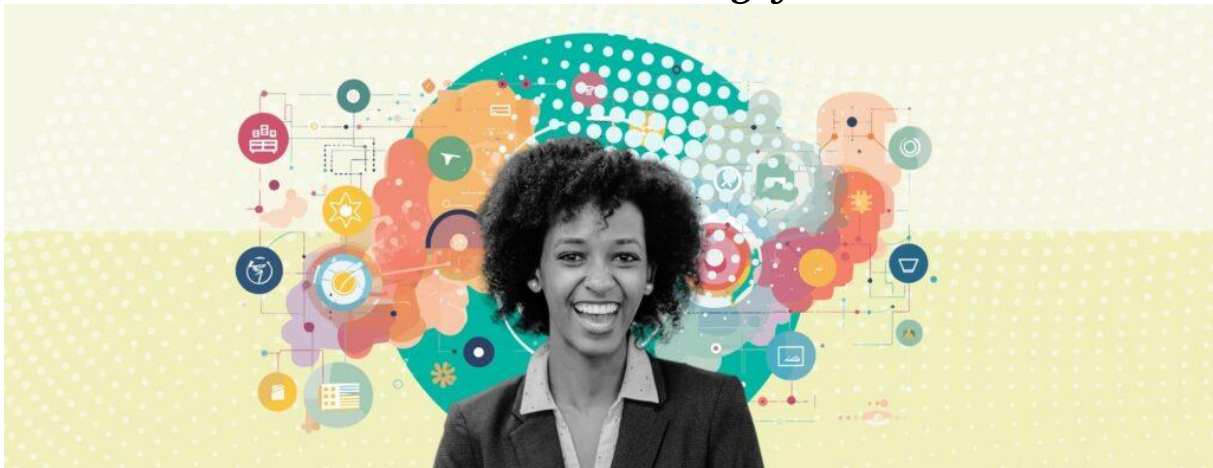
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Before we comprehend the role of the workplace within God's overarching mission, it is essential to recognize the purpose of work, joyfully embrace work as a calling, and consciously worship God through our work.

Work as God's Purpose for Us

Some Christians mistakenly associate work with a burden stemming from the Fall. Conversely, others draw a distinct line between the sacred (church activities) and the secular (vocational responsibilities), creating a dichotomy between Sunday worship and weekday work. It is essential to recognize that God intends for us to view work as his gracious gift, not the bane of our existence. Even before the introduction of sin into the world, God assigned Adam and Eve the task of tending to the garden and exercising dominion over the Earth (Genesis 2:15). The Genesis narrative unveils a foundational understanding that God wove work into the fabric of human existence right from the outset. Within the biblical framework, work emerges as a divine purpose for humanity. Our very existence is intertwined with the purpose of work, which God bestowed upon us as a valuable gift. By creating us in his image, God designed us to co-create and steward the physical world entrusted to our care. Rather than being a consequence of sin, work is portrayed as an essential element within God's intended blueprint.

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Work as a Calling

Work is not merely a secular obligation but a divine calling. Through work, we can fulfill our calling and contribute to the transformation of society. Colossians 3:23 states, 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.' This perspective transforms the mundane tasks of the workplace into meaningful contributions to a higher purpose. It underscores the significance of approaching work with diligence and excellence, urging believers to dedicate their efforts to the Lord.

The concept of work as a calling is rooted in the understanding that each individual is uniquely gifted and has a purpose in God's grand design. Ephesians 2:10 emphasizes this idea, affirming that we are 'God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.' This suggests that God has a specific plan for each person's life, including the work we engage in.

Work, then, becomes a way for Christians to fulfill our calling and contribute positively to the world, aligning our efforts with God's intended purpose for our lives. When we view work as a calling, we seek opportunities to make a positive impact, to be agents of change, and to reflect the love and values of Christ in our workplaces.

Work as Worship

Every believer, in the diverse realms of our vocations and occupations, has the capacity to function as a priest by offering their work as a meaningful form of worship to God.



Hundreds of times in the Bible, the Hebrew word *avodah* is used to mean both 'to work' and 'to worship'. It reflects the interconnectedness of daily activities and religious devotion in every aspect of life. Our work is meant to serve God's purposes more than our own, which prevents us from seeing work as a means to an end but an end in itself. Why is this the case?

Since we are created to worship God, when we approach work with diligence, excellence, and a heart devoted to God, it becomes an act of service to God and worship of God.

The principle of the priesthood of all believers is articulated in 1 Peter 2:9 as follows, ‘But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.’ This highlights that each believer enjoys a direct and personal relationship with God, and is summoned to present spiritual sacrifices and devoted service to him. This concept rejects the notion of a distinct clergy class serving as intermediaries between God and the laity, underscoring the priesthood of all believers as a fundamental aspect of Christian identity. It advocates for the idea that every believer, in the diverse realms of our vocations and occupations, has the capacity to function as a priest by offering their work as a meaningful form of worship to God.

In practical terms, work as worship involves following Jesus’ instruction to be salt and light, as recorded in Matthew 5:13-16. Being salt and light involves reflecting his character, upholding ethical standards, having uncompromising integrity, serving our co-workers with love and kindness, and constantly seeking opportunities to lift up those with whom we interact. It reflects the understanding that one’s work life is not separate from one’s spiritual life, but rather an integral part of living out one’s faith in our day-to-day lives.



Work for the Fulfillment of God’s Mission

The slogan used by the Lausanne Workplace Network, *where 99 percent of the global church engages the world with the gospel*, comes from a declaration made at the 2019 Global Workplace Forum in Manila. If the transforming work of God in our lives is to be lived out and shared with others, the workplace is the most important platform to do it on because it is the place where non-believers and believers are most likely to engage with each other. It is ground zero for the fulfillment of the Creation Mandate, the Great Commandment, and the Great Commission.

The Creation Mandate

In Genesis 1:28, God bestowed his blessing upon Adam and Eve, instructing them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ This is the creation mandate—God’s directive for humanity to multiply, inhabit, cultivate, and exercise

dominion over the earth. Likewise, in Genesis 2:15, we find that ‘The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.’ This passage further emphasizes the call to engage in purposeful labor and stewardship over the created world.

The Great Commandment

The great commandment requires each one of us to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). In the context of work, this commandment holds profound implications for how we approach our work lives. Loving God involves obeying all his commandments and instructions. We must be honest, diligent, faithful, and just in the work we do. Loving one’s neighbor as oneself extends to interactions with coworkers, suppliers, customers, and others in the professional sphere. It calls for a genuine concern for the well-being of others through acts of kindness, compassion, and a commitment to serving others.

The Great Commission

Whether in offices, factories, schools, hospitals, or any other workplace, believers have the opportunity to live out the Great Commission by sharing the love of Christ through word and deed.

The Great Commission, as outlined in Matthew 28:18-20, commands believers to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Christ commanded. This commission isn’t limited to vocational missionary work but extends to every follower of Christ, including those in the secular workplace. Just as Jesus sent out his disciples to spread the Gospel, every Christian is called to carry out this mission in his daily life, which especially includes the workplace where most of our waking hours are spent. Whether in offices, factories, schools, hospitals, or any other workplace, believers have the opportunity to live out the Great Commission by sharing the love of Christ through word and deed.

The Workplace and Lausanne 4

A. W. Tozer reminds us that ‘The church is not simply a religious institution; it is not a religious theater where performers are paid to amuse those who attend. It is an assembly of redeemed sinners—men and women called unto Christ and commissioned to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.’^[1] If we take this advice seriously, the church must reflect on its role as the cornerstone for preparing every Christian in the workplace to effectively fulfill God’s mission by prioritizing, encouraging, and supporting workplace ministry.

At the Fourth Lausanne Congress, over a third of the participants will be from the secular workplace. It is a unique opportunity for workplace participants and the remaining participants who are in vocational ministry to find innovative and meaningful ways to influence the Global Church in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Let us hope and pray that this will be a turning point in church history as the clergy and the laity collaborate to unleash the potential of the workplace in global mission.

Endnotes

1. A.W. Tozer, *Tozer on Worship and Entertainment*, ed. James L. Snyder, (Chicago, IL:Moody Publishers, 2006).

AUTHOR'S BIO



Joseph Vijayam is the founder and CEO of Olive Technology. He earned a BS in computer science from Biola University, California, and an MBA in information systems from Georgia State University. Born in Hyderabad, India, Joseph lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He and his wife, Suneetha, have three sons and a daughter. He serves as the catalyst for the Lausanne Workplace Ministry Network and serves on the boards of a few ministries. He also serves on the board of BAM Global and the editorial board of *BusinessasMission.com*. Along with his focus on global IT solutions, Joseph has years of experience in Christian ministry around the world and is an advocate for workplace ministry that is striving to affirm the missional role of workers everywhere.

