

# The Grad Experience Week 7



## **Can I Have a Purpose and it Not Be Religious?**

*Key Lesson: You have the freedom to take risks, to fail, and to make mistakes. Remember, God's primary aim for us is that we be conformed to the image of his Son and be his ambassadors to the world (regardless of our career) -- and that we enjoy him in the process.*

Welcome to Week 7 of the Grad Experience. **Each week as we look at specific topics that are extremely present in your world today. Our goal is for you to spend some time discussing in a safe place so you ask questions and develop a stronger viewpoint on each of them.** Even if they are not present in your high school right now, they will eventually be present on a college campus, workforce, or military ... or just in the general culture of the world you live in.

**Our goal** isn't for you to leave here each week with a definitive answer to some of life's tough questions when it comes to living life after high school, but to get you at least **thinking about the topic and determining how that connects with whatever faith you claim to have.**

Last week we looked at suffering and how to understand it even knowing we have a loving God who wants the best for us but still allows suffering in our lives.

So let's just ask the big question:

**Does my work or career matter to God? What about my schoolwork now?**

Everything about you matters to God, *including* the work you do—not because God needs you to accomplish a career or task, but because **work is a realm where each of us—no matter what kind of work we do—can honor God and love others.**

Share this verse with students:

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. – Genesis 2:15*

**Why do you think God created us to work?**

From the very beginning, God built work into the fabric of humanity.

- Adam/Eve were given roles in the Garden of Eden (be fruitful and multiply, have dominion over all God made) - in other words, to engage creatively and redemptively in the world as God's ambassadors.
- **Work was NEVER the result of the fall – “hardship” and even “hardship in work” was, but work was always part of God's plan.**

Read passage ...

*<sup>23</sup> Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. <sup>24</sup> Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. – Colossians 3:23-24*

## When you read this passage from Colossians, how can it make you view a career (work in the future) and school work (work now) different?

Each of us is created as a worker, regardless of the task or tasks God draws us to.

- And while it can be challenging to discern the particular sort of work God may be calling you to at any different point, **there can be no doubt that he made you as a worker and that he expects you to work, to the degree you are able.**

## Our work matters to God, but what about the specific work we might do.

- **Are we called to do that?**
- **How does (or even does it) matter if it is a “religious” calling or called to work in the “secular” world?**

Listen to former Coca Cola senior executive Bonnie Wurzbacher:

*(a devout Christian, daughter of a minister, studied to become a teacher and taught for a short time, but then took a different role in business)*

“I’m very passionate about the critical role and responsibility of business and how it advances the economic well-being of people around the world. Business allows other institutions to exist—including churches, schools, hospitals, and every non-profit organization—by creating jobs, salaries and corporate tax revenues. It gives Christians an incredible place to honor God. When a business fails you see the impact on everything else, and vice versa.” – Bonnie Wurzbacher

## She originally studied to become a teacher. Could she have glorified God and loved others through a long career in the classroom instead of at Coca Cola?

Yes! Many people have more than one career over the course of their lives – pursuing second and third acts that are very different from their initial work.

Quickly share these three truths about the place of work in God’s Kingdom:

### Three truths about the place of work in God’s Kingdom:

1. **Everyone is called to belong to Christ and participate in his creative and redemptive work.**
2. **Everyone is commanded to work to the degree they are able.**
3. **God calls us to a whole life, not just to a particular job.**

## Is ministry or missions the only way to have a meaningful purpose or calling in life when it comes to work or a career? Why or why not?

- No, this line of thinking can cause you to feel guilty for having dreams and pursuing goals in a career. God calls us to a whole life serving him – whether or not that is in the ministry field or not. Your work can lead to a calling that allows ministry to happen.

## Here’s an important question to think about: Are there “sacred” and “secular” work? If so, what makes them different? If there is secular, how can we bring Christ into this area of our lives OR is that work really sacred?

- **IMPORTANT: The idea that there is “sacred” work and “secular” work is not taught in the Bible.**

We do see priests and rabbis that were spiritual guides. But **we also see carpenters, fishermen, farmers, shepherds, merchants, and craftsmen whose work honored God too.**

This idea of sacred/secular probably came from **the Greek idea of dualism: that there were two opposing forces at work in the world – good and evil.** Often, they applied this to many areas of life.

- Here's where they got off track: they rightly believed that humans had both a body and a spirit but **viewed the body as bad or less important than the spirit**, which they saw as good.
- With this perspective, it was not difficult to imagine that **work that dealt with spiritual things was viewed as more valuable** than other jobs like baking bread or tending sheep.

Yes, there is a specific calling for the minister of God in this vocation, but the Bible doesn't teach about any two-tiered scheme of value where "church work or full-time ministry/missions" matters more to God than any other kind of work.

**The Bible tells us that all work is Christian work.**

"All work done well and for his glory is Christian work." – Dorothy Sayers (English writer & poet)

**What do you think about this statement?**

- God is honored by Christians who do good work, and who are being transformed to the image of Christ and not conformed to the world.
- He is honored by believers who care for others and who serve and lead them well – regardless of the work environment.
- **We are all called to bring Christ into our professions – sacred or secular.**

Now here comes the really big question:

**How can we know we're doing what we were made to do?**

**WATCH VIDEO:** How do we know our calling in the workplace? – J.B. Wood (see PowerPoint teaching slides)

- **After watching that video, what do you think?**

"The place God calls you to is the place where your great joy and the world's great hunger meet." – Frederick Buechner (author & minister)

God doesn't mean for serving Him to make us miserable! He gives us unique combinations of gifts, desires and opportunities that both fit us, and answer real needs or hungers in the world around us.

When our demonstrated skills are affirmed by others and put to good use, we sense that we are doing what we are made to do.

- **HOWEVER: Not everyone is paid for the work they believe is their calling. Many people work their whole lives at a job that pays the bills so that they can do the thing that fills their soul on their own time.**

**God is calling us to a life that honors Him and blesses others. There are as many different ways for that to look as there are people.**

- Your way won't look like your best friend's way, and it may not even look the same in your own life from season to season.
- If you are using the gifts and skills God gave you, working with excellence and doing your work in a way that positively impacts others, you are doing what you were made to do!

### So if God has a plan for me, can I miss it or mess it up?

The idea that one wrong move from us can stymie the will of God is heavy burden to bear, and we can spend a lifetime second-guessing ourselves and asking, "what if?"

- "What if I hadn't failed organic chemistry?"  
"What if I'd gone to a different university, or hadn't changed my major?"  
"What if I hadn't gotten married when I did, or married the one I did?"  
"What if I'd found out sooner that I really loved to sing," or design buildings or create IT systems?

The truth is, God's plans for us are always good and in the end, His sovereign, absolute will *will* be done.

- **ILLUSTRATION TRUTH: Look at the Old Testament story of Israel. God's will was to get the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land**, and for Moses to lead them there. And despite plenty of grumbling, disobedience, unbelief and compromise, God got them there. What should have been a few months' journey took 40 years, but the Israelites arrived in Canaan.

We can mess up, but we can't derail God's sovereign will. What he means to be, will be. We can create delays and confusion, cause ourselves and others pain, and fail to glorify God in the process, but if we are truly seeking God and living in obedience to Him, we can be confident He will do with our lives what He means to do.

### What are your thoughts about this statement? Agree or disagree? Why?

**Remember, God started a work in your life – both spiritual and secular and He is still working on it (even know as a high school senior – way before you even have a career!)**

*And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. – Philippians 1:6*

**Bottom Line:** You have the freedom to take risks, to fail, and to make mistakes. Remember, God's primary aim for us is that we be conformed to the image of his Son and be His ambassadors to the world (regardless of our career) -- and that we enjoy Him in the process.

Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God. – Jim Elliot, missionary and martyr

Before we close out today, I want you to listen to a quick video from Civil Rights Activist, Dr. Martin Luther King about work.

### VIDEO: Dr. Martin Luther King – Be the Best of Whatever You Are

Dr. King says ...

When you discover what you're going to be in life, set out to do it as if God Almighty had called you at this particular moment in history to do just that. Set out to do a good job and

do it so well that the living, the dead or the unborn couldn't do it any better. – *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

QR Code for the church Darkroom website – GREAT VIDEOS & READS! // **Close with prayer**