

Work As Post-Pandemic Worship: The Urgent Task of Formulating a Theology of Work for Today

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ABSTRACT: Over the last three years, we have all been witnesses to a watershed moment in recent history. COVID-19 ushered in a new era of human existence, the result of which is that our present context is not the same as that which existed prior to spring 2020. As we emerge from the pandemic, COVID-19 appears to have impacted morality and created a new ethical landscape from that which existed prior to it. The marketplace has undergone change, and we are only just beginning to assess what the future might look like. The first glimpse of the workplace as it emerges from the pandemic reflects what we are discovering in society as a whole—that a moral shift has taken place towards individualism, with choices being driven by personal preference. The knock-on effect will most certainly impact how Christians perceive the intersection of theology and work. Today’s marketplace is more self-focused, which undermines how Christians must approach their work. The need for a re-evaluation of a theological ethic for this emergent marketplace is evident. The Christian response to work today ought not to embrace the new individualism but must reject self as god and reaffirm the original creation mandate of work as stewardship, worship, and a missional endeavor.

KEYWORDS: work, worship, theology, business, pandemic, COVID-19, stewardship, individualism

INTRODUCTION

Western civilization has at times been punctuated by key events that have served as watershed moments in how we understand ourselves and each another, as well as how we respond to God. Such events include Martin Luther’s 95 Theses; the 1776 Declaration of Independence; the horrors of the First World War; the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941; the falling of the Berlin Wall in 1989; and the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center. Each of these is universally acknowledged to have changed the course of human history, after which, the world, was never the same.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been acknowledged as yet another watershed moment in the history of human development. Not only have we been witnesses to it, but we are all still having to adjust to life in a new, post-pandemic era. This is especially true in the workplace, which saw radical and sudden change in the aftermath of the pandemic, the likes of which our generation of businesses people had not previously seen. There is now mounting research indicating that the workplace, as it has emerged from COVID-19, appears to exhibit stark differences from that which existed before spring 2020 (Ratan, 2021). In other words, there is a growing

consensus that the workplace is not the same today as it was prior to the pandemic (Buckingham, 2022). The first indicators reveal one of the major impacts of the pandemic has been an acceleration in the move away from objective morality towards an increased focus on individualism and personal subjectivity (Germani 2020).

As post-pandemic values continue to shift, the workplace is also undergoing change, and it is estimated that as it emerges from the pandemic, not only are more workers than ever looking for new employment, but behaviors learned after spending almost three years working in isolation continue to impact how we relate to one another (Huang, 2022). For example, Gafni (2022) observes, “The lack of communal conversations around the water cooler during the pandemic has caused an increase in decisions being made by the individual in isolation” (22:35). Another notable shift is a decline in the number of workers who still believe that moral values can exist in absolute form, and therefore the idea that decisions ought to be determined by reference to an objective framework is now increasingly denounced as being an antiquated concept (Dominic, 2020). Workforce consultant Festenstein (2021) published a report during COVID-19 observing, “The pandemic has rapidly accelerated changes that were already in motion.... People

are re-evaluating their beliefs, and their relationship with work and the traditional workplace... trends speak to... greater attention to the individual within the corporate workplace” (p. 2). If such indicators prove to be true, the longer-term impact for traditional theological conclusions about work as worship, which have historically embraced objective frameworks to understand morality, will face increasing pressure to capitulate to shifting cultural trends.

Why, then, has there been a quickening of individualistic values in the marketplace since spring 2020? What was it about the pandemic that contributed to changing values within the workplace? Answers are beginning to emerge in some of the first waves of post-pandemic research. We are starting to understand how changes to everyday behavioral patterns thrust upon us by COVID-19 are now having a longer-term impact on our overall decision-making (Chen, 2021). During the pandemic, our behavior changed as we were instructed to observe new regulations so as to reduce transmission of the virus. Authority figures consistently instructed us to pay attention to issues that revolved around the self, such as guarding our individual health, focusing on personal hygiene, working in isolation, and avoiding contact with others. As Dominic (2020) observed:

Individuals were encouraged to remain in their own personal space as much as possible and avoid any type of social interaction. So, whether it was working, studying, shopping, praying, dining or entertaining, the pandemic forced everyone to move all activity into the safety of private isolation. Early conclusions of post-pandemic research indicate that anti-transmission efforts not only protected the individual from viral infection but ended up encouraging individualism more than ever. (para. 1)

In other words, we turned our attention away from others-focused values and became more insular and self-concerned (Rajkumar, 2021). For over two years, everyday routines revolved around isolation and self-focused actions, giving us no choice but to consistently think about ourselves (Kropp, 2022). It should come as no surprise, therefore, as we begin to evaluate the pandemic, that we discover societal values have shifted towards the self and away from previous traditions (Johnson, 2022). There is a growing recognition of the enormous moral impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our culture, and that it has been an epochal moment in global history. So much so that, for the first time, we are beginning to describe pre- and post-pandemic categorizations of humankind (Jonsdottir, 2021). The lasting effect of

homes being transformed into offices and the communal nature of the workplace being thrust into sudden and prolonged isolation cannot be overstated. Evidence is emerging about the longer-term moral impact that the pandemic has had on businesses, as employees—who became accustomed to working alone for protracted periods—are now demonstrating a growing reluctance to return to pre-pandemic norms (Yarbrough, 2022).

It would therefore be an error to conclude that the pandemic has not changed the way we work (Microsoft Work, 2022). McKinsey and Company (2021) published an insightful article at the height of the pandemic concluding,

In the 1800s, the Industrial Revolution moved many in Europe and the United States from fields to factories. In the 1940s, World War II brought women into the workforce at unprecedented rates. In the 1990s, the explosion of PCs and email drove a rapid increase in productivity and the speed of decision making, ushering in the digital age as we know it today. And in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic drove employees out of offices to work from home. (p. 1)

The United States is having to come to terms with changes in the marketplace, the knock-on effect of which will most certainly impact how Christians understand the intersection of theology and work. After all, Christians are not immune to these changes and will naturally respond to shifting workplace values. We must acknowledge how important this issue is for a theological understanding of work. After all, it is work, not church attendance, that has the potential to be the most common expression of worship for most Christian adults, taking up more hours per week than any other waking activity.

We therefore now stand at a fresh intersection of faith and work and would do well to realize that we are being presented with a unique opportunity to re-evaluate how Christians in business should respond to the changes that took place during COVID-19, and what that means for work as worship today. How we view and understand the relationship between work and worship requires a fresh re-evaluation in light of a changed marketplace. This is especially important for Christians at work, because a correct understanding of how we work is a vital component in how we understand our relationship with God.

WORK AS POST-PANDEMIC WORSHIP

The speed and breadth of the changes we have witnessed within the marketplace since March 2020 have created an imperative, not only to reiterate a theology of work but also to specifically articulate a response to them. We must re-examine how a biblical understanding of faith at work interacts with our post-pandemic culture. Should it imitate culture and embrace new individualistic norms, or should a theology of work today stand in opposition to the post-pandemic culture? We cannot separate who we are at work from who we are in Christ. We are not Christians who happen to work; we are Christian workers.

Prior to the pandemic, much had been written articulating a theology of work, and there is a wealth of material presenting a biblical perspective of work. The goal of this article is to focus on three key theological aspects of work and explain why these are especially important for where we are as a post-pandemic society. We will re-examine the following concepts: (1) work as stewardship, (2) work as worship, and (3) work as a missional endeavor. We will reframe each for today's marketplace.

WORK AS STEWARDSHIP: THE REALITY OF MANAGING FOR ANOTHER

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1, English Standard Version). Thus begins the historical “narrative of humankind as we know it, starting with the clearest affirmation that all things are the result of an intentionally creative action by an eternal God. In the five days that followed that initial activity, God not only continued to *form* what He had made but also *filled* it with various kinds of life (Genesis 1:2). On the sixth day, it seemed that His creative purposes would be completed as He populated the land with every kind of living creature. Once again, as with every prior day, all that God had created was good (Genesis 1:24-25). What else could God possibly need now that His creation had been so perfectly and intentionally crafted, replete with every kind of plant and animal life imaginable?

At this stage in the Genesis narrative, any reader could be excused from assuming that the Creator, having formed and filled the earth, would then establish His kingdom and throne, and enter His creation in person, thereby assuming physical authority to enjoy and manage all that He had made (Van Duzer, 2010). After all, in virtually every other situation known to humankind, the

one who creates almost universally does so for his or her own enjoyment. It is the one with the ability to create who manages that which he or she has made. For instance, the artist paints either to enjoy the artwork himself or to sell it, thereby providing for his needs. The same is true for the homebuilder, the sculptor, and the baker. In almost every walk of life, those who create do so because they want to personally benefit from the fruit of their work.

However, on the sixth day, God's work did not cease with the populating of the land with animal life. Instead, the creation narrative took a surprising turn. Rather than personally entering that which He had made and ruling as sovereign, God's design for the world was to create humankind, both male and female, in His own image (Genesis 1:26-28). Throughout the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, there has been considerable theological commentary given over to what the expression “in His image” means. While it is outside the scope of this paper to enter into a full examination of each of these views, it is appropriate for our present purposes to observe that the phrase likely indicates that a personal God created humankind with the inherent capacity to think, feel, comprehend, and enter into relationship with (at least initially) God Himself as well as one another (Cochrane, 1984). We are made in the image of God, partly, in that rather than personally enjoy and rule over creation Himself, we were appointed as God's stewards to act on His behalf, having been specifically granted His authority to rule (Waltke, 2007). We reach this conclusion with confidence given the express mandate to exercise dominion over every other aspect of the world God made. Ross (1984) summarizes humankind's stewardship as follows: “God's purpose in creating human life in His image was functional: man was to rule or have dominion... as (God's) representative” (p. 29). In other words, the creation account provides us with the clearest understanding of what we were created to do: We are to rule, as God's vice-regents, over the entire earth (Constable, 2022). We are the Creator's managers, given the task to steward that which He made, acting as His representatives, ruling, and managing the earth as appointed stewards. God did not *need* humankind to serve as his manager/steward. We were not created because God was in some way lacking the ability either to exercise dominion in person or because He did not have the necessary knowledge to do so. In the same way that God *chose* to create, we also affirm God *chose* to appoint man as his vice-regent over the world, not out of necessity but rather as a voluntary expression of His divine

freedom and purposes, all of which we believe are to bring Himself—Father, Son, and Spirit—glory (Grudem, 1984). Christopher Wright (2004) observes, “To be made in the image of God is to be made to work *for* God. It is fundamentally something mankind is obligated to do as a creature made in the image of its Creator and entrusted with the obligation to reflect and manage for Him” (p. 148). At the end of the sixth day, God did not transfer ownership of the earth to humankind. Instead, He appointed us as stewards to oversee all He had made on His behalf. The implication is that we are not owners; we are appointed managers.

Today, we no longer live in the Garden of Eden, where Adam first found himself, but that does not mean we are no longer stewards of creation. For many of us, it is the workplace that is the everyday means through which we manage on behalf of God. Wong and Rae (2011) conclude, “We do God’s work in the world in our jobs because they are connected with the task assigned to all human beings to exercise dominion over the world” (p.49). Just as God worked to create the world, so too the human role is to labor as an expression of the divine image and likeness (Bergsma, 2018). God Himself did not come to earth to manage it in person but instead created humankind for that purpose, delegating to them His authority over all things so that they could manage it all on His behalf. As the Creator’s image-bearers, we are to serve as His appointed representatives, rulers, and stewards over all things, whether that is over a creature or plant or whether it relates to a financial resource or commercial opportunity. This goes to the heart of what it means to be human. We are of course a creation of God, but we were also created for God, managing various elements of the world. When He issued the command to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it, God was appointing humankind to serve as managers on His behalf, and we do that by means of stewardship, working the specific part of creation He has called us to (Bock, 2018).

Why is this so important to reiterate for a post-pandemic theology of work? To put it quite simply, as we encounter a marketplace in which the wants and desires of the individual have taken center stage, there is a pressing need to restate *why* we are here and *what* we are to do. Today’s marketplace, as it emerges from COVID-19, has become increasingly self-focused, and making decisions about work, resources, time, and opportunities are now much more self-serving. Such notions are the antithesis of how Christians must approach work. We need to be

reminded that we are not the ones being served. The theological reality is that we are not working for ourselves, a CEO, or even global investors. We are working for God Himself. The biblical understanding of work is not limited to managing on behalf of an employer. Instead, we are managing elements of creation for the eternal God who brought all things into existence. From the shop floor worker to the chief executive officer, we are all stewards of God’s creation, managing that which has been entrusted to us for God’s glory, not for men. That ought to transform how we approach our work. Decisions ought not to be reached simply by asking, “What’s best for me?” Instead, the Christian at work must ask, “How am I to steward these resources for the One who has entrusted them to me?” Christians are not called to be self-seeking, and this is especially true at the daily intersection of faith and work. Scripture requires that the way we work must be God-serving and others-focused rather than looking to our own needs.

This does not mean the Christian at work capitulates to his unbelieving co-workers. After all, to be good stewards means maximizing what has been entrusted to us to the greatest extent the marketplace permits. Indeed, John Wesley is reported to have urged Christians in business to gain all they could by honest work and industry (Wogaman & Strong, 1996). In other words, Christians at work need not shy away from advancement, opportunity, or economic gain. However, it does mean that we are to remember whose we are. We are stewards who submit to God. We are creatures serving their Creator. This means that the Christian response to today’s marketplace emerging from the pandemic is not to be assimilated into a moral theory that puts self at the heart of decision-making. The mandate is to reject self as god and reaffirm the original creation mandate of stewardship. The question should not be, “What kind of working environment best suits me?” but instead ought to be, “What kind of working environment enables me to better manage for God?” Instead of quiet-quitting, post-pandemic Christian values at work should emphasize going the extra mile. This demands a concerted refocus on objective truth and values. Our values ought to imitate His. To borrow from Oscar Wilde once more, a post-pandemic theological ethic for the marketplace ought to emphasize an environment that imitates God rather than one in which God is made to imitate today’s workplace

WORK AS WORSHIP: COUNTERING POST-PANDEMIC INDIVIDUALISM

To work is to worship. After creating Adam, God placed him in the Garden of Eden, “to work it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Here we not only realize that our role on earth is to work but also to worship as we work. The reference to *work* in Genesis 2:15 is a Hebrew word [עָבַד] that not only describes a physical tending to the land and vegetation but also describes serving and honoring (Brown et al., 1994). It is fundamentally a word that describes worship. We were created in the image of God to serve as His managers, stewarding all of creation, and that very task—work itself—was to be an act of worship to Him. We are to worship as we work, or to put it another way, all of our work is worship. A theological ethic of work for today must therefore begin with a reminder that work was part of God’s original creative purposes for all of humankind. That has not changed in a post-pandemic climate. As Wright (2004) affirms, “Work is part of the image of God in humankind, for God is not only presented to us in the creation narratives as worker, but it is an essential constitutive part of our God-imaging humanity” (p. 148). Bonhoeffer (2008) understood this well, writing, “Adam was to keep the garden of Eden, which was the divine mandate of labor. This is part of the created world of things and values which is designed for the glorification and service of Jesus Christ” (p. 209). Therefore, to be made in the image of God and given the mandate to work means our response to God is to worship through work.

Work has inherent value to God. It is not just something we are able to do. It is that which we are obligated to do in mimesis of the One in whose image we were originally made. It is a spiritual offering to God as is prayer or preaching. It is a prime means of glorifying God. In fact, although this paper is focused on a post-pandemic context today, a theological understanding of work goes beyond conceptualizing it only in terms of the aftermath of COVID-19 because our work is not something limited to this present moment in time. Work is a form of worship that will even continue in the eschaton (Volf, 2018).

Knowing that work is one of our prime responses to God means that, for example, the farmer should understand that he worships while plowing the fields. The baker worships God with every loaf produced, the accountant as she prepares a client’s tax return, a lawyer as he represents a client in court, the academic in teaching, and the mechanic in repairing. We all serve and worship

God in our roles as stewards and managers of creation, with the prime response to our calling being, “How should we work in a way that praises God?” (Bock, 2018). It is a mentality that ought to prevent any Christian from thinking that his everyday (secular) work is somehow *less-than* those who preach from a pulpit on a Sunday or plant churches in the jungles of South America. Work, all forms of work, is an important mode of worship to God.

This means there is a present responsibility for every Christian to work faithfully with what God has entrusted to him, not to practice idleness or self-focused individualism in a post-pandemic marketplace but to worship in the everyday routine of work today. Living a life that pleases God is tantamount to faithful stewardship in matters of employment, trade, and profession, just as much as it is in matters of spreading the gospel. Loftin and Dimsdale (2018) criticize any division between the sacred and the secular on the basis that all such distinctions are not only unbiblical but are untenable from a theological perspective. They argue such thinking leads to the danger of concluding that God thinks less about our working lives than he does about church attendance. Their conclusion is that all such notions must be rejected (Loftin & Dimsdale, 2018). Martin Luther repeatedly taught his congregants about the importance of knowing they worshiped as they worked, affirming that Christians not only serve God at church but do so just as much in the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop, and the field (Coleson & Pearcey, 1999). Wong and Rae open their theological ethic of work with the notion that faith and work cannot be separated into different sections of the week, in which one element (such as church attendance) is considered holy and sacred, and the other (such as work) is relegated to the secular and common (Wong & Rae, 2011). They argue that work for the Christian should not only be conceptualized as a way to generate financial provision but is best understood as an altar, a point at which faith is lived out and the means through which God is worshiped. It is the arena in which the Christian stewards the gifts, skills, and resources that have been entrusted to him or her as an offering in service to the God who has given them. Wong and Rae (2011) conclude, “Work is a fundamental part of who God is and who we are, being made in His image. It is immensely valuable to God because it is the means by which human beings partner with God in exercising dominion over the world” (p. 53). Barth (1961) took the concept a stage further, arguing that work was not only an integral element of Christian worship but was also a

fundamental part of each believer's sanctification, without which maturation in Christ could not be fully achieved.

The need to clearly articulate the theological importance of work as worship is not something that has only arisen out of the pandemic. Even prior to COVID-19, there was mounting alarm about the widespread misconception among Christians about the link between work and worship. In an explanatory foreword to a compilation of essays evaluating work and theology, Mark Greene lamented the fact that most Christians have no compelling, holistic vision for mission in their Monday to Saturday lives, and still less for their daily work (as cited in Loftin & Dimsdale, 2018). There is even more urgency today, however, because if we fail to correctly present a theological ethic as the workplace emerges from the changes brought about by the pandemic. The reality is that Christians will simply embrace (mimesis) the values of a shifting workplace, which will adversely impact the way they worship God. The working environment cannot simultaneously elevate both self and Him, and the culture would appear to be leading towards the former.

A post-pandemic theological ethic for the marketplace must therefore counter the pressures of today's growing individualism by restating the truth about work. It is not about us. It is about God. It is not merely a means to an end. We are not to be slaves to our jobs because we are slaves to Him (Mark 10:35-45). Work is an integral part of how we express our praise to God. The post-pandemic workplace needs a bigger view of God and smaller concept of self. We are to approach every Zoom meeting, phone call, customer, and email as an opportunity to not only produce our best effort but also to serve as conduits through whom God is at work. As we work, we are to seek first God and His purposes (Matthew 6:33). We are to offer who we are to Him in every way as a form of worship (Romans 12:1-2). We ought not to think in terms of driving to work as much as we should see that we are driving to worship. The post-pandemic Christian response is to reorient around the One who gave us life, purpose, and stewardship responsibility, asking ourselves, "What does God want to do through me today?" Scripture contemplates a vertical orientation between the believer and God, reflecting the greatest commandment that we love Him first and foremost as we work (Matthew 22:37). The second commandment of course is that we love our neighbor as ourselves, to which we now finally turn.

WORK AS MISSION: BEYOND THE FINANCIAL BOTTOM LINE

Most theories of ethical reasoning since Ancient Greece have, in one form or the other, focused on the goal (τέλος) of the person making the decision. For example, Aristotle asserted that the τέλος of virtue was to be a good and contributing citizen, thereby reaching one's full potential for the benefit of the community. A century later, Epicurus determined the true τέλος of humankind was the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. Thomas Hobbes, and later John Locke, would emphasize a τέλος grounded in one's unique social context. René Descartes rejected supernaturally occurring τέλος in favor of humanity's rationale ability to determine for his or herself. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill would contend that τέλος was a general good for the aggregate of the majority. For Hume, it was experience. For Kant, it was the categorical imperative. For Nietzsche it was the pursuit of the *übermensch*, and the best version of self. Although each of these theories differed in many ways, the reality is that they all share a common denominator: the role of the individual (Velasquez, 1989). Each theory requires decisions to be made in pursuit of human goals. The individual is the focal determiner of moral thought, whether as a citizen, rational being, empiricist, universalist, or otherwise. In other words, the ultimate τέλος is always driven by the moral agent him or herself.

The situation is much different, however, with a theological work ethic. Rather than the driving factor being individual ends, the τέλος becomes God's purposes, not humankind's. For the Christian, therefore, moral values and the application of them are determined in pursuit of God's purposes rather than our own. This means the Christian life is inherently a missional life, in which all things further divine plans and not our own. Some of the last words Jesus spoke before His ascension included, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20). A more accurate rendering of the imperatival participle "go" would be to translate it "as you go," the force of which means that wherever Christians go, whether across the world to an unreached people group or across the city to the workplace, the mandate is to make disciples of Jesus (Hagner, 1995). This is an explicit command to every Christian to actively be engaged in the task of telling and teaching others about Christ.

The workplace, one of the largest components in most Christian's weekly schedule, is included in that command, which means that work itself can be an inherently missional activity. We are all missiologists in the marketplace, and our jobs and business opportunities are platforms to be used as instruments for sharing the gospel. Each one of us is an active participant in God's mission of redeeming creation (Armstrong, 2016). Culver links the Great Commission of Matthew 28 to the creative stewardship mandate of Genesis 1, concluding, "There is a similarity between the original divine mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, and this new mandate for believing disciples of Jesus" (p. 239).

Work must, therefore, continue to be regarded as a missional endeavor for the Christian. Not only is it a source of financial provision and an opportunity to utilize gifts and find a sense of productivity and purpose, but it is also, or perhaps even primarily, a place in which we are witnesses for Jesus Christ. It is the mission field in which Christian workers are to be engaged. It is a missional calling through which we are to serve God and those He has sovereignly placed around us. Wong and Rae (2011) summarize this concept as follows: "In our work we co-operate and participate with God so that, in His providence He accomplishes His work in the world" (p. 28). Volf (1991) expresses the same sentiment, writing, "As Christians do their mundane work, the Spirit enables them to cooperate with God in the kingdom of God" (p. 114).

In other words, our workplace is God's mission field, and He may choose to use us in our everyday working environments to accomplish His sovereign purposes. Work is not merely something believers do in order to pay rent or keep on the lights. It is a divine calling made on their lives through which they serve as stewards for God, making Him known through every employment and business activity. Merrill (2018) addresses this in his essay, observing that many in our post-modern world regard work as a necessary evil or drudgery, that which must be endured or tolerated to survive in society. In short, he argues most people today see it as anything but a blessing. For the Christian, however, Merrill argues we should see it as a gift from God, and when it is done well, it is an honorable, noble, and privileged calling. He believes the workplace is where we can best reflect God, who is Himself constantly at work on our behalf (Merrill, 2018). The command to make disciples relates to the workplace just as much as it does to vocational Christian ministry, whether in a church or overseas. To re-phrase a well-known biblical passage so that it is better understood for

the marketplace: Whatever we do at work, whether we're emailing or talking to customers, whether it is attending meetings or interacting with a client, it must all be done for the glory of God and to imitate Christ (Colossian 3:17). We would do well to remember that for most of his adult life, Jesus worked as a carpenter. A great deal of his ministry took place in everyday workplace settings in first-century Palestine. Frequently, His teaching involved the use of parables that drew on common working conditions. Jesus is our example of what a workplace ministry can look like. He engaged people where they were and used words, expressions, and illustrations that related to their daily employment. The Apostle Paul continued this example, often working to further his missional activity. In Acts 18:1-4, we have one of the clearest examples of his activity in work, in which he is described as tent-making. This is not to be understood as an activity that he occasionally did to fund his real job of telling people about Jesus. Rather, we should understand that tent-making was a prime mode of spreading the Gospel. The Theology of Work Project (2016) described it this way:

Tent making itself is a real ministry of witnessing to Christ. Paul is a witness when he preaches and when he makes tents ... Paul's money-earning work was an effort to build up the community economically. Paul employs his skills and possessions for the sake of the community, and he explicitly says that this is an example others should follow ... Paul's varieties of work in the sewing shop, marketplace, synagogue, lecture hall, and prison are all forms of witness. (para. 7)

Wong and Rae (2011) write, "God calls people to work in order to gain opportunities to proclaim and model the reality of their faith. Through our work we have opportunities to build relationships and to demonstrate care and concern for people with whom we would not otherwise have contact" (p. 45).

In our post-pandemic marketplace, that mission has not changed, even though the appearance of the mission field has. The eternity of Scripture suggests we must continue to affirm that God calls His people into the ministry of business and that, irrespective of where or how we work, the missional task before us is just as relevant as ever before. In fact, the need to reiterate our mission may be more important, especially as the workplace now looks so different to so many. Before the pandemic, most workers had to physically leave their homes and commute to the office. There was a greater sense of going to the office, which meant the link between going into work and

going into mission was not too great a stretch to make. However, in today's emergent marketplace, especially with the growth in popularity of working from home, the task for many Christian workers is to understand that their homes have now become the de facto gateway into the mission-field, and the task of making disciples has for many become a virtual or hybrid endeavor. To *go* into the mission field at work is increasingly to move from the bedroom into the living room. In our post-COVID marketplace, the command to make disciples takes place for many without them even leaving their homes. Residential offices have become a missional marketplace in a way not previously understood. Many of our pandemic-era working habits are here to stay, and while we may have been able to justify a pause in workplace missional activity during COVID-19, we can no longer continue to do so as we emerge from it.

Most church pastors do not encounter the sheer number of today's post-pandemic workforce that working Christians do. The post-COVID marketplace continues to be a far greater mission field than its church counterpart on a Sunday morning. The heightened individualism we see today is not driving people into churches; it is having quite the opposite effect. The greatest chance most people have of encountering the gospel in a post-pandemic context is when he or she encounters a Christian at work, whether in person or virtually. In a society that has become increasingly self-serving, we are called to engage in that encounter. Forster (2015) stresses the missional enterprise of work, writing, "The impact our work has on our communities is one of the larger realities that define the meaning of our work.... [W]hen people work together and engage in economic exchange,... they recognize the need for one another" (pp. 64, 84). We ought to be attentive towards the needs of others we come into contact with in the marketplace, doing all we can to create working environments, whether virtual or in person, that display the presence of Jesus. Bock (2018) argues that the working environment is one of the most suitable places in which to imitate Christ. He believes it is the responsibility of every Christian at work to seek the highest good of others and to conduct oneself with integrity, imitating God in whatever manner He has us laboring. He concludes that the way we impact others is integral to the way in which we are stewarding for God. He finishes his essay: "How we do our work and how we view our work involves carrying out the divine mandate to manage the earth well in line with what God commanded in Genesis 1:26-28. How we work with

others and do our work, including especially how we treat others, builds credibility for us in any other endeavors we undertake with them" (p. 72). Although many around us now prioritize their own wants and desires over their employers, Christians are called to work as those who submit to and reflect God. Our co-workers and clientele may be driven by individualistic demands, but we are to embrace the objective values that are revealed to us by God. Isolated individualism is fast becoming the means through which many conduct business. The present is an important time to affirm a concerted return to a theological ethic for Christians in business that embraces the commands and character of God because it is those values that truly imitate Him to those around us. If we really are managing for God, having been given a window in time in which to steward our workplace resources as an offering of praise to God, then our missional endeavor must be service-oriented and Christ-centered, a task that demands a fresh theological ethic for today's emerging marketplace.

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