

# WORK AND REST

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*Finding God wherever you  
are.*

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DiscipleshipPath.com was created by pastors Phil Wiseman and Megan Koch at Table Church in Des Moines, IA. You can contact them directly at [hello@tablechurchdsm.org](mailto:hello@tablechurchdsm.org).

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# A BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORK

We do not make it very far into the Bible before we encounter the topic of *work*. Work is a part of God's plan for the people he created:

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."  
(Genesis 1:26 NLT)

Notice this phrase: "They will *reign*." Humans are made in the image of God, and God has commissioned us to reign over the earth *for* God. In ancient times, it would be common for a king to establish a vice-regent to represent him in a particular part of the kingdom. The vice-regent would reign over that portion of the kingdom in the name of the king himself. Something similar is happening here. God places his people on earth to govern it for Him.

This is very different from other ancient stories of creation. In ancient Babylon, for example, they taught that the gods created humans, but as *slaves* instead of *royalty*. According to the Babylonian myths, humans were forced to dig trenches for the gods and serve them food. This was the point of their existence.

With God, our work is that of royalty. In other religions, our work is that of slavery.

*Which view of work do you have? A Biblical one, or a Babylonian one?*

When we work in any capacity, we are fulfilling our creational mandate: to *reign* over the earth. Whether you're a truck driver, a waitress, an artist, a parent, a teacher, or a doctor, you are contributing to the functioning and flourishing of God's creation and people. This is no insignificant thing. You are God's vice-regent. This is God's world, and we represent him here. Our work is inseparable from that calling.

## FINDING GOD IN THE WORKPLACE

It might be difficult for you to locate the presence of God within the work that you do, especially in your day job. Whether you think it's true or not, the eight hours a day you spend at work can *feel* godforsaken. How do we uncover God's presence in places like that?

In Genesis 20, Abraham and his wife Sarah are traveling through a strange, foreign land called Gerar. Abraham, scared for his own life, is afraid that when the locals see how beautiful his wife is, they'll kill him and take her. So he lies to them: he says that she's his sister, not his wife. They do take Sarah away, as he predicted, but they let him live (this is admittedly not Abraham's finest hour).

Sarah ends up in the palace of King Abimelech. However, before he lays a hand on her, God shows up to him in a dream and tells him that if he touches her, he's toast. Abimelech promptly returns Sarah to Abraham and asks him why he didn't tell her that she was his wife. Abraham's response is insightful for us:

"Because I thought, *surely there is no fear of God in this place*, and they will kill me because of my wife" (Genesis 20:11 NLT, italics added).

In other words, Abraham came to a place that was strange and scary, and he *assumed that God was not already there*. But Abraham was wrong. God was active and alive in Gerar, and the fear of God *was* in that place—as we see in Abimelech's response.

We all have work to do here on earth. Perhaps yours is more difficult than you'd prefer. Just remember this: God made you to be his royal representative in the work you do and the places you do it. What's more, God *is* at work alongside you.

So let's not make Abraham's mistake, thinking that God is not alive and active in our places of work. Rather, let's view work as worship: *all* of the work you do is God's call to represent him for the sake of his kingdom.

## FINDING GOD IN REST

There were a number of "creation stories" in the ancient world. These stories often had similarities to one another. The Bible's story of Creation, which is found in the book of Genesis, shares some of these similarities. However, Genesis also has some very important *differences*.

In these other creation accounts, the god would often create the world, and we would then expect the god to create a palace or temple upon a mountain. The god would then dwell within that temple and declare it holy.

In Genesis, we see God finish the work of creation, and right when we might expect Him to create a temple or palace for himself, he does no such thing. He does something completely unprecedented. Instead of creating a holy temple, God creates a holy day.

On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation. (Gen. 2:2-3 NLT).

Abraham Heschel points out that whereas God did not create a palace of space, he creates a palace of time. And unlike those other so-called gods of the ancient world, our God invites us to join Him in that palace.

That's right: those other "gods" created palaces to themselves where they could be served by human slaves. Our God? He created the weekend.

God is not like us. We believe that the things we do and the things we produce are what add meaning to the moments that we live. God understands that it is the other way around: it is the moment that adds meaning to the things we produce. Our obsession with production has robbed us of the very means of encountering God: time. We meet God in time, and if we don't make time, then we won't meet God. That is why God created his "time palace"—also known as Sabbath.

A.J. Swoboda says that our Sabbath forgetfulness has caused us to become "perhaps the most emotionally overworked, spiritually malnourished people in history." If this is the case, then finding time to meet God in rest is a matter of utmost urgency.

Maybe it's time for you to meet God in rest. After all, Sabbath forms one of the most foundational aspects of the Old Testament. It is the bedrock upon which our faith is built. Why? Because God knows that if we don't ever stop to simply be with him, we won't have a relationship with him at all. And that, of course, is the whole point of everything.

Perhaps it's time for you to enter God's palace of time.

## **FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. What is the difference between a Biblical view of work and a "Babylonian" view of work? Which view best describes how you approach your work?
2. What difference does it make to understand that we were created as royalty instead of slaves?
3. Think about your work. This doesn't necessarily have to be a "job" but it could simply be the public space where you spend much of your time. Do you see this as a place where God is moving? Or does it seem "godforsaken," as Abraham thought of Gerar?
4. If you don't see God moving at your work, what are some specific prayers you could pray that might help with that?
5. Think about the people you work with. Can you imagine God working in their hearts? Think of one person in particular. How might you be able to join God by showing that person the love of Jesus?
6. When was the last time you stopped everything you were doing with the sole purpose of focusing on God?
7. "Those other 'gods' created palaces to themselves where they could be served by human slaves. Our God? He created the weekend."

God created a holy day which he invites us into, rather than a holy palace where we don't belong. What does this tell us about him?

8. What does it mean for you to meet God in his "palace of time?" In other words, what does it look like for you to sabbath?
9. Articulate 2 goals:

What are some specific ways you will engage with God's movement in the places you work this week?

What are some specific ways you will engage with God from a place of quiet rest?