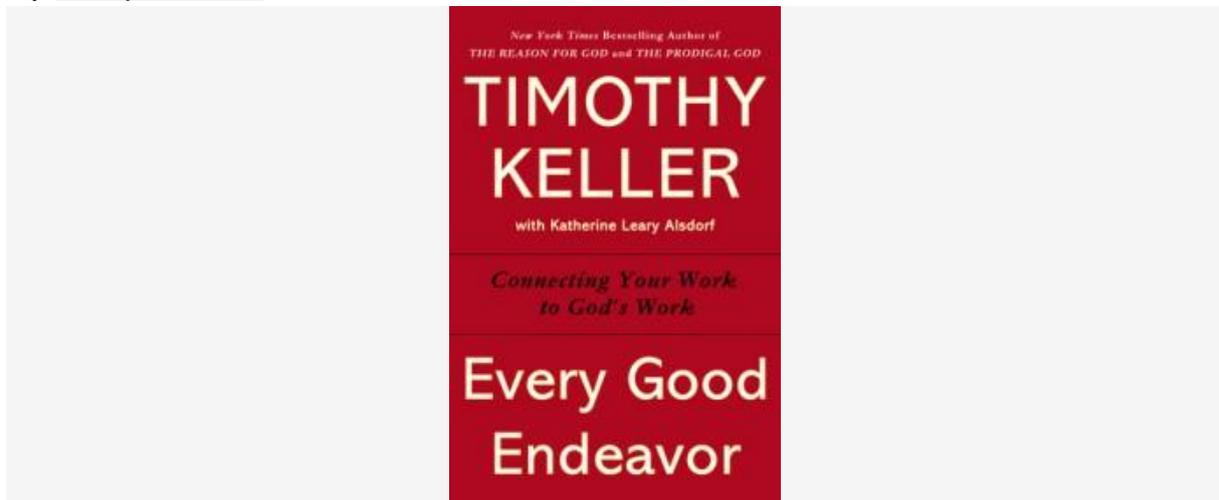


# Work as Service vs. Idolatry

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By Joseph Sunde



In a recent appearance on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, Tim Keller discusses the major themes of his new book, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*, which aims to properly orient our work toward worship and service ([HT](#)).

In the interview, Keller argues that we live in a culture that has misplaced its identity in work, rather than pursued it as part of a deeper, more sacred commitment:

When you make your work your identity...if you're successful it destroys you because it goes to your head. If you're not successful it destroys you because it goes to your heart—it destroys your self-worth... What you need with faith, is faith gives you an identity that's not in work or accomplishment, and that gives you insulation against the weather changes. If you're successful, you stay humble. If you're not successful, you have some ballast. So, basically, making your work your identity, kind of an idol, to use Biblical terminology, is maybe the big sin of New York City.

There is, of course, a balance, and much of Keller's book is devoted to uncovering this balance. As he goes on to explain in the interview, "Work is a great thing when it is a servant instead of a lord."

Yet even beyond the ways in which faith might allow us to "stay humble" or provide stability amid economic failure, we would do well to contemplate how a heart of service and transcendent commitment might impact the broader economic environment, for ourselves and the world around us.

It's a peculiar thing that market economies allow us to seek our own interests while still meeting the needs of others. How much more glorious might things be if we were to put God at the forefront of our motives and decision-making? With a heart of service and an identity rooted in something stronger than the economic winds of the day, how much more fruitful might our work be for the common good?