

Your Work Matters to God

Doug Sherman and William Hendricks (Navpress, Colorado Springs, CO 1987.)
<http://www.barnabasministry.com/review-yourworkmatters.html>

Your Work Matters to God is a thought-provoking and practical look at how most of us spend the majority of our waking hours. The primary author, Doug Sherman, is a former United States Air Force pilot who brings to view a truly Biblical perspective of work. It is hard to do justice to this comprehensive and yet practical book in a short review.

Most Christians who work secular jobs are torn between several different perspectives when it comes to our secular work. The first perspective about work is that spiritual things have nothing to do with work: With apologies to Kipling, "work is work, and church is church, and never the twain shall meet." Under this model, Christians "commute" between their professional lives and their spiritual lives.

The second perspective about secular work is that work may be necessary to support ourselves and our families, but it is inferior to the work of the ministry. Thus, secular work "will all burn" and it only exists to facilitate the ministry and spiritual things. As a result, work provides us money to give to the work of the church and opportunities to reach out to co-workers.

In each of these cases, secular work itself is meaningless-- a tether on the soul. The only work that really matters is the "ministry work." These attitudes are often revealed when work requires someone to be less involved at church activities, or when professional accomplishments are unappreciated or dismissed as "worldly." Such perspectives make work itself unclean, dirty, unholy, unenjoyable. If secular work doesn't matter to God, then secular workers don't matter to God. Such attitudes are often prevalent in unhealthy churches.

Fortunately, neither of these is a Biblical perspective of work. The Bible is full of thought and perspective on work that is rarely talked about or preached on in churches today. *Your Work Matters to God* brings out many of these teachings in a practical and logical manner that is both orthodox and challenging to the "conventional wisdom" about work.

For example, the authors point out is that work existed before the Fall in the garden. God created the garden, and he created Adam to work it (Gen 2:15). God said his work was good (Gen 2:2-3). Thus, God himself is a worker (built the universe), and Adam's work was part of the purpose God had for him; Adam and God were partners in the work of the garden. Work was not part of the curse due to the Fall.

In fact, work exists to support mankind. Work is an expression of obedience to God and a fulfillment of his design for mankind, to fill the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:28). The authors encourage every Christian to see the "big picture" on how his or her job works for the good of mankind. For example, truck drivers provide goods so families can eat or have products they need. Bankers help people manage their finances so

they can care for their families. Christian workers have a basis for doing their jobs out of love for mankind and not just to make ends meet.

Your Work Matters to God also addresses other important aspects of work: growth, careerism, integrity, wealth and lifestyle, evil in the workplace and leisure. It is the duty of all Christians to learn and teach what the Bible really says about "secular" work.

The topic of secular work is a much needed discussion in the church today. If Christian workers "commute" between their jobs and spiritual lives, it is probably because the church has reinforced that perspective by its neglect of the topic. And this neglect is a two-edged sword. Not only has this approach failed Christian workers, it fails non-Christian workers. Non-Christians working with Christians may not see much of their co-workers' faith in action. Or they may come to church and hear a lot of religion, but not much about how faith matters in the place where they spend the most time-- their workplace.

Work matters to God, and it ought to matter more in the church than it does. We preach a lot about marriage and parenting, but hardly ever about work and careers. Perhaps this neglect is because full-time preachers don't really understand the work world because they are not a part of it. But that's no excuse for neglecting this important topic. When John the Baptist gave instructions about repentance to his hearers, his instructions were not only about religious things but about work behavior (Luke 3:14). And he didn't have to be a soldier to preach about integrity and contentment to soldiers.

For those who work secular jobs-- the vast majority of people-- it is about learning all of God's purpose for all of our lives, not just his "religious" purposes. *Your Work Matters to God* is a must-read for every Christian worker and every minister who leads Christian workers.