

CHAPTER 6 WORK



This study guide offers a suite of resources for teachers, small group leaders, or parents to generate discussion and reflection. This guide is not intended to be a structured 'lesson plan', but aims to provide questions, discussion starters, Bible passages, videos, and challenge questions that can be shaped into a structured experience.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

You might use one or more of these to foster engagement in a discussion about work:

- > What is work for and does it have to be fulfilling?
- > Is work more than just 'putting food on the table'?
- > How will you decide what to do with your life?
- > What questions are shaping your decision-making about work?
- > Does it matter what work you choose or will all options provide the opportunity to contribute to something much larger than yourself?
- > Are there some forms of work that you shouldn't choose to do? Why?
- > Talk about the worst job you have ever had.

BIBLE PASSAGES

This resource is not intended to be a Bible study. However, discussion and reflection on one or more of these passages, and how they might inform a view of the topic of the chapter, is encouraged. It would be good to direct questioning towards, "What was the original context?", "What was the author's purpose?", and "How does the passage add to a big picture view of work?":

So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. *Ecclesiastes 2:17-18*

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. *1 Corinthians 7:17*

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. *1 Corinthians 10:31*

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters . . . *Colossians 3:23*

Do not make any idols. *Exodus 34:17*

STIMULUS VIDEOS

You might use one or more of these videos to generate engagement. Or you might use one at the end of the discussion with the focus being to critique the assumptions within the video. You might follow the viewing with questions like “What feelings did that video give you?”, or “Would this video be helpful to show young children? Why or why not?”, or “What do we learn about our culture in this video?”:



Hard work

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lemu4VPBJDQ>



You hate going to work ...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FZQ4_9-iLM



Live to work or work to live

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcNOtBg8d84>



First day on the job

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=noq6FXkyVy8>

All videos can be found at www.thefrogandthefish.com/videos

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK

It might be that reading one, or both, of these extracts from *The Frog and the Fish* could be a helpful addition to your discussion time:

“Work does not always feel rewarding and fulfilling and it can be a struggle to see how it is contributing to something much bigger. Many children around the world find themselves in demeaning child labour; the ever-expanding consumerist view of the world results in human trafficking and women being owned and traded as sex slaves; in the developing world millions of workers sit on assembly lines doing robotic jobs for a minimum wage; for some humans, the extent of their ‘work’ is to continually beg for mere survival. Maybe these are extreme examples, but even when we find ourselves engaged in tasks and jobs that are not demeaning by nature, we can still find our pursuits tainted with a sense of fruitlessness and frustration. Have you experienced a sense of this in your ‘school work’, or part time jobs, or even in your hobbies and other activities? If all human work is good by God’s design, why does it sometimes seem that it comes with so much striving and guilt, fear and frustration, and a tonne of toil? This is actually what God told the first humans would happen as a result of their rebellion and independence; expulsion from the perfect garden and into a world with distortions and decay. Work is still good by design, but the decay is ever-present, shadowing all that we attempt to do.”

The Frog and the Fish, Chapter 6, pg. 59

“The pivot point in history when God entered into the creation as a human had a transformative impact on all strands of creation. Everything had been tainted but now everything has the potential for restoration and transformation—including work. The good news is that not only is there now the potential for our relationship with our creator to be renewed back to perfection through Jesus, but even cultural activities—like work—can be seen through a lens of restoration. There is distortion and damage, but God has a plan for restoration that we can participate in. When we go about our ‘doing’ as humans, we can be approaching what we are involved in with a mindset that we are potentially participating in a project—God’s project—to restore all things. A Bible-shaped perspective on work is a big perspective: full of hope, full of purpose, full of the goodness of God that provides sustenance and resilience when decay makes the ‘working’ a grind. Do you share this big, rich view of work?”

The Frog and the Fish, Chapter 6, pg. 61

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

We assume that the aim of your discussion/reflection with your group is to present a biblical perspective on the topic of the chapter. However, it might be that challenging the culturally shaped assumptions currently held needs to compliment this. You might use one or more of the following questions to help achieve this:

1. Do you believe that work, at its core, is a good thing?

It’s distinctly Christian to see all forms of work as good. Work is not just a necessary chore that we just have to suck up, hoping at the same time that we can find moments of personal satisfaction—it is good by design.

2. Do you know anyone who lives like work is an ultimate thing in their life?

When we give work the place of the ultimate thing in our lives, it will cease to bring the fulfilment that it is designed to give. Idolising work brings work addiction and ultimately toil.

3. Do you deep down believe that all work is equal?

“So what do you do?” should never be an opportunity for judgement. Society needs many forms of work and activity to function. The biblical view of the world does not allow for a hierarchy of worth based on the nature of your contribution.

4. Are you expecting to experience struggle and toil in your work?

Work is good by design but is now suffering from distortion and frustration. The brokenness that has entered creation has affected everything including work. Work is good but is now not without struggle.

5. If work is broken how can it ever be fixed?

God entering the creation as Jesus is the beginning of the restoration of all things—including work. He invites us to join in.

6. Do you believe that your work is going to bring fulfilment? How and why?

When we participate in God’s big project of restoration, our work becomes bursting with potential for hope, meaning, and purpose through service, self-sacrifice, and a commitment to a vision bigger than ourselves.