

1-1-2004

Faith and Work: Questions for Discussion and Reflection

Jim Street

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Street, Jim (2004) "Faith and Work: Questions for Discussion and Reflection," *Leaven*: Vol. 12: Iss. 2, Article 11.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol12/iss2/11>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Religion at Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Leaven by an authorized editor of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu.



Faith and Work

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

“A Thin Blue Line”

by Frank Shirvinski

1. What do you think of the claim that the creation story highlights “the kind of work God performs” rather than providing “a distant reflection upon one creative event”? What is gained by focusing more on the “who” of creation rather than the “how” of creation?
2. What do you think of the claim that the type of work we perform is a continuation of God’s work of bringing order from chaos? How might such a view influence your attitude toward your own work?
3. What do you think of the distinction between work’s value being a matter of the kind of value it adds to life and community as opposed to work’s value being found in the continuation of the “self-giving, self-limiting love of the Creator?” How would either or both of those views influence your current attitudes toward your work?
4. How do you typically think of your work: as a means to exercise your creative distinctiveness in the ongoing creative work of God or as a way of advancing the impersonal aims of the “vast, unseen machine?”
5. What is the difference between thinking of workers and coworkers as human beings versus thinking of them as “human resources?” How has the “human resource” model affected you in your work?
6. In what ways are your attitudes toward your work affected by the claim that “our work is more than the sum of our parts, our work is ultimately re-creative; not because of what we produce or secure, but for what we can provide and share?”

“On the Job in a God-Centered World: Understanding Everyday Work in the New Testament”

by Thomas Robinson

1. Reflect on Dr. Robinson’s claim that work is not a special category of life demanding a specific

“theology of work,” but that work is life and that all theological understandings that interpret and give meaning to life give meaning to work. On what basis would you either agree or disagree with that claim?

2. List specific ways by which a believer’s work is transformed by Christian faith. How has your attitude toward work and the work itself been influenced by your faith in Christ? How is that different from what you observe among non-Christian coworkers?
3. List three forms of work that society considers “mundane” or “without value” and discuss how each might be understood differently by a Christian who performs such work.
4. What difference does a Christian understanding of “power” make in terms of how you exercise or respond to power in the workplace?
5. How does the pursuit of “wealth,” broadly understood, influence your approach to work? In what ways, if any, have you found that pursuit to be a challenge to your faith?
6. What was it about Jesus’ message that may have appealed more to the craftsman or laborer than to the wealthy or powerful?
7. Explore the relationship between work as “craft” and work as “calling.” What is gained in seeing one’s work as both “craft” and “calling”?
8. To what extent do you work for “personal gain” and to what extent do you work as a way to gain resources “to express self-giving love through generosity to others?” How would your attitude toward work be affected if you came to see work as a way to gain resources to express generosity toward others?
9. How do the teachings to slaves speak to all Christians whose work experience is one of repetitive drudgery and meaninglessness? How does that teaching influence your attitudes toward the mundane drudgeries of your work?

“Learning to Take Joy in Our Work: Some Preliminary Theological Reflections”

by Philip D. Kenneson

1. What do you think of the idea that the absence of joy in work is not because of the work but the “frame through which most of us understand and evaluate our work”?
2. To what extent, if at all, is your sense of self-worth a matter of what you do in your work and how much money you make? Think of some form of work that would seem to you be of less worth than your current work. If for some reason you woke up and found yourself doing that job, to what extent would your sense of self-worth be affected?
3. In what ways does the realization that Christ has “demonstrated that we already are somebody” affect how you think about the tendency to find your value in what you do or how much you make?
4. To what extent can you say that you so experience the abundance of the riches of faith that you would, with Luther, be willing give yourself as Christ to your neighbor? What prevents you from experiencing such a sense of abundance? Is there a side of you that thinks that maybe Luther is simply exulting in the faith? Why or why not?
5. Would your current work have value even if it did not provide the resources to secure the things you need and desire? What would that value be?
6. How is your thinking about work affected by the distinctions Kenneson draws between an instrumentalist view of work and work as one way through which we participate with God to bring in the Kingdom?
7. Kenneson suggests that most Christians pay more attention to the issue of how they should go about doing their work than they do about the kind of work that they do. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
8. The fact that most Christians do believe there are limits as to the kind of work that a Christian should do suggests there are boundaries. Why do you suppose those boundaries are drawn with some kinds of work (e.g. working in the pornography industry) but neglected in other fields?

“How Can You Live Like That in a Place Like This?” Christian Witness in Corporate Settings”

by Jim Street

1. Street lists several valid reasons for corporate constraint on Christian witness. Do you agree or disagree? Can you think of other reasons as to why a company might wish to constrain expressions of faith in the workplace?
2. In what ways would expressions of Christian hope benefit those who cross your path in your current place of employment?
3. What do you think of the idea that witness ought to be grounded more in self-preparation than in simply speaking to others about the faith? Do you agree or disagree with the Pyramid Model? Why?
4. How intentional are you about preparing yourself spiritually for ministry in the corporate or other workplace?
5. Why is it that Christian hope is of such importance in the corporate environment?
6. What do you think of the claim that corporate Christians ought to understand listening as a form of ministry? What risks do you see in listening to the concerns of others? In what ways, if any, has the fear of listening affected your ability to witness to the faith?
7. Respond to the claim that many Christians do not know how to speak because they do not know how to worship, live, or listen.
8. Why is Christian speech so dependent upon worship, life, and listening?

“Keeping the Divine Appointment: Advice to Young Christians Entering Business”

by John Morris, Emma Morris, and Jim Street

1. How much thought did you give (or have you given) to carefully thinking through your approach to work especially as it relates to enhancing your ability to serve God in the workplace?
2. Make a list of “fields” in which you believe Christians should not work. Review the list and explore the underlying logic behind your choice.

3. The authors mention venture capitalism and advertising as fields that would be difficult for young Christians. Do you agree or disagree? What other socially legitimate fields can you think of that could provide difficulties for young Christians who seek to live out their faith in the workplace?

4. What is “corporate culture,” and what could you do to better understand a company’s culture?

5. Do you agree or disagree with the authors that one can learn skills and life experiences that will help them better serve God in the workplace? What might some of those skills be?

6. How might attention to lifestyle decisions such as taking on consumer debt be thought of as hampering one’s ability to serve God in the marketplace?

7. What do the authors mean by the phrase, “keeping the divine appointment?” To what extent has (or will) “keeping the divine appointment” enter into your thinking about entering the workplace? What difference would thinking in those terms make in how you approach your work?

All of Life Is Ministry: Reflections on Ministry in the Marketplace

by Dean Collins

1. How does Collins’s opening sentence strike you in terms of how you typically think about “the” ministry?

2. How difficult would it be in your current work to seek out other Christians so as to build fellowship on the job? Do you see that as a worthwhile ministry in and of itself?

3. In which way do you tend to think of work: as simply a means to obtain a paycheck to put food on the table, as a way to find an outlet for self-expression, or as a way to serve God as ministry?

4. For you, is work about work, or is work about ministry? Discuss your choice.

5. Whereas many Christians pray for leaders and coworkers in the marketplace, what do you think of the idea of praying over or about a work process? (Would you pray about completing a project on time, the amount of waste in a production process, the quality of customer service? Why or why not?)

6. What do you think of the claim that it may be more effective in terms of workplace ministry to see people as on a continuum of spiritual searching?

7. Have you ever thought about how demonstrating respect for authority in the workplace can itself be a form of ministry? What do you think about that as a ministry?

8. What can churches, ministers, and staff do to help members engage their work as ministry?

“Faith in the Workplace: Being a Christian in Public Service”

by Jack Scott

1. How do you answer the question with which Scott begins his article: “Can a Christian be a politician?” Give reasons for your answer.

2. What do you believe would be the principal issues with which you would struggle if you were a senator and a Christian who represented 850,000 people?

3. Scott writes that he chose Micah 6:8 as the basis for his public service. Can you think of ways in which Christian conceptions of justice, mercy, and humility may differ from how such terms are perceived in American secular society? Does the logic that underwrites Christian and secular conceptions of justice, mercy, and humility differ, or is it the same?

“Reflections on Being a Public School Teacher”

by Morris Yates

1. What do you think of the idea that influence through quality relationships is critical to being a Christian teacher in a public school?

2. What key elements of character comprise “influence through quality relationships?”

3. “Influence through quality relationships” must be accomplished in the day-to-day of the public school teacher. Can you think of a public school teacher who had a positive Christian influence upon you? What did that teacher do and under what circumstances?

