

Work: Does it matter?

Hi. At the moment, many of us are working from home. We are embracing different ways of working and inter-relating with our colleagues, clients and students. One welcome relief for some of us is the cut in commute time. Another is the blessing of technology, to have online face-to-face conversations, even across international boundaries. However, there are new challenges and frustrations. For some, the sense of 'work-life balance' has all but disappeared, with the constancy of emails and messages at all times of day and night. One Primary school teacher commented about the new class dynamic, with parents 'sitting in' on lessons and giving their kids the answers. Some businesses have either had to close, hunker down or 'hibernate', while others have needed to 'pivot' to adapt to the changing circumstances. Unemployment is a new experience for some, as businesses have shed some or all of their workforce. In the face of any circumstances, work can sometimes feel futile. We may want to ask: does our work matter to God?

GETTING STARTED: How has the current climate with Covid-19 affected your work? What are some of the benefits of working from home? What are some of the challenges? If you cannot work from home, how have you had to adapt, to deal with social distancing requirements?

READ: 2 CHRONICLES 26:1-18

- ☞ Steve has attributed the framework to Matt Woodley (so I must too).¹ What things stood out for you, from the sermon this week? What does it mean, for you, that your whole life matters to God?
- ☞ Have you ever felt that there is a conscious or unconscious bias in Christian circles, that vocational ministry is seen as having a higher value and/ or worth than secular work? Have you sense that there's a 'sacred vs secular' divide, when it comes to work?
- ☞ By contrast: In what way do you see your work as a form of ministry? Eg bringing healing; bring hope; being salt and light in our world?
- ☞ Grae shared some thoughts about the words of Col 3:23, "Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters". What does it mean for you, to glorify God in your work and to do the best work you can? How does that change your attitude at work? How does that change how you relate to your work colleagues, students, clients, etc?

⚠ In this passage we read about King Uzziah (aka Azariah) who is also mentioned in 2 Kings 14:21-22, 15:1-5. He reigned in Judah for 52 years, from 791-739BC. This is the same king that we hear about in Isaiah 6: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord ..." (Is 6:1)

TEAR APART THE TEXT

- ☞ Another OT person that is mentioned is the prophet, Zechariah, who was both a mentor and instructor to the king, especially as Uzziah was only 16 years old when he became king, succeeding his father who had died. Do you have a mentor or older Christian that you share your life with and who provides you with feedback and wise counsel? In what ways is having a mentor, helpful?
- ☞ In 2 Chron 26:5, we read, "He set himself to seek God ... and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper." Similarly, in Prov 3:5-7, we read: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil." In my work, I am often faced with challenging situations and problems, so a frequent 'breath prayer' is 'Lord, give me wisdom'. How do you 'seek the LORD' in the course of your work day? How have you seen God 'straighten your paths' and provide you with insight, as you have sought God and his wisdom?
- ☞ In 2 Chron 26:5, we read: "as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper". What does it mean for us to 'prosper' or be successful in our work? Does it mean that we get recognition, good pay rises and promotions? And what about when we lose our job, because we have taken a stand on a particular issue? Does that mean we are not 'prospering'?

¹ Woodley, M. (2020) Your Whole Life Matters to God. <https://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermon-series/earthyspirituality/earthyspirituality4.html>

- ① Steve highlighted a number of Uzziah's accomplishments which included business and political duties:
- v2: He rebuilt Elath (now known as Eilat) which was an industrial and shipping centre, as a strategic gateway for trade. Building cities is important to God.
 - v6: He went to war against the Philistines, broke down walls of cities and rebuilt towns. Steve highlighted that everything worthwhile in life, including freedom, family and marriages, has to be fought for, at some time. Even defending our country is important to God.
 - v9-10: Uzziah did the work of a civil engineer, including constructing towers and digging cisterns to provide clean water.
 - v10: Uzziah "loved the soil", so he had farmers and vinedressers working the land. He did some work out of sheer joy.
 - v11-14 He had amazing organisational and administrative skills, including managing people and making sure they had the right equipment, tools and protective clothing to do their jobs.
 - v15: "he set up machines, invented by skilled workers". Uzziah commissioned his own research and development group, who used imagination, creativity and ingenuity to create something new.

🗨️ Which of these things struck a chord with you? Are you a tradesperson – and realise that God delights in the work you do? For teachers and nurses, do you see that your job contributes to the wellbeing of the city? Are you in an area where you are involved in defence or law enforcement, but sometimes think these jobs are seen as unrecognised? What things do you do, including hobbies, sheerly because they bring you joy? What are things that you do, which involve creativity? What are things that you do, that are needed, to provide administrative insights into organisations?

🗨️ In Eph 2:10, the apostle Paul wrote: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (NKJV) We are reminded that God first uniquely created us and formed us – so that we would do good works, that we are uniquely created to do. Each person in our life group has things that they do and enjoy, which may be totally different passions, to anyone else. What are the things that each of you do, that God has uniquely equipped you to do?

🗨️ Uzziah started well and we are told in 2 Kings 15 and 2 Chron 26:4 that "He did what was pleasing in the LORD's sight, just as his father, Amaziah, had done.", yet he ended up being struck down with leprosy for disobedience and pride. This week, our sister Kath mentioned a question she had been pondering recently: "Will I be found faithful?" What does it mean, for you, to not only start out being faithful, but also to finish both your life and work life, having been faithful? What does it mean for you to be righteous vs sinful? What does it mean for you to be humble, rather than filled with pride? How do you respond when you're challenged when your behaviour is not honouring to God?

APPLICATION: The words of a 1993 worship song echo the ideas in Phil 3:13 and Heb 12:1-2. To be faithful, we need to both run with perseverance and keep our eyes fixed Jesus. Reflect for a moment on these words and consider how we will be faithful, humble and righteous as we do our work.

Forgetting what lies behind
Setting our hearts on the prize
Always keeping our eyes on our Lord Jesus
We're running the race to win
All the way to the end
Laying down every sin
That would seek to hinder us

And we'll be faithful to our calling
For you are able to keep us from falling
For in your promise
We will trust
We'll be faithful to finish the work you began in us.²

🧠 HEAD – What have you learnt from the study this week?

❤️ HEART – What has challenged you, personally?

👐 HANDS – What are you going to do about it this week?

² © Hosanna Music. (1993) We'll be Faithful.