

Session 1: Saved and deployed

It is clear from the Bible that there are two types of “calls” from God to humans.

The first is the call that leads to salvation. Humans become saved when they respond by calling on God in on-going repentance, leading to the obedience of faith.

The second is the call to service in God’s Kingdom. This is both general and specific for each believer.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:8-10 NIVUK

The Bible teaches that God wants all people to be saved. Salvation is a gift that can only be received through repentance and on-going faith in Jesus Christ. Those who choose to repent and demonstrate faith in this manner are the “elect” or “chosen” – in Christ Jesus. People are not forced by God to accept His gift of salvation. He does not reject anyone who comes to Him, on His terms.

God also elects or chooses people for service. Through His foreknowledge God is able to choose the right people for the right functions or roles. These functions and roles are essential for moving God’s redemption plan forward. God is sovereign and all-powerful to the extent that He can accomplish His purposes through people without violating the freewill He gave them. The conflict and confusion about election is because people have merged election for salvation and election for service. There is ample evidence in the Bible that salvation and service are separate ‘tracks’ of election.

The following resource may be helpful:

Course: Laying Foundations

Session 8: Salvation, election and predestination

https://youtu.be/dJZwy1A_7D0?si=GX3qg8tbYuVcZbK



Examples

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Pharaoh – *Romans 9:1-17*
- Nebuchadnezzar – *Jeremiah 27:6-7*

‘Good’ roles are given to God fearing people and necessary ‘bad’ roles are given to people who harden their hearts against God and continue to practice wickedness.

Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.’ In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

2 Timothy 2:19-21 NIVUK

Session 2: Your measure of faith

All those who are justified by grace alone, through faith in Jesus are called to do good works that God prepared in advance for them to do.

Reflection/discussion

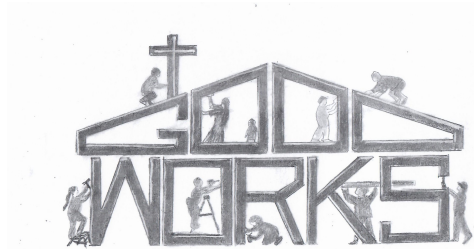
What are good works?

Colossians 3:23-25

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Matthew 25:14-28

Romans 12:3-13



Good works are wide ranging. Any work that is beneficial to humans, in line with God's commandments, is "good work", whether it is done within the Church or out in the world. Every believer and disciple of Jesus is in full time work/ministry for the Lord and so all of their work should be done with the attitude that they are serving God. It is to God that each person must give an account of all their work.

There are general good works that all believers should engage in. They are very important but do not require particular skills.

What are examples of general good works?

It is important to understand that God has also given each person particular skills, talents and opportunities. All of these should be deployed to do the "good works" that God not only has prepared for each person but has provided a unique measure of grace or faith to enable them to effectively accomplish what He has called them to do.

Practical application

Be prepared to faithfully engage in general good works.

Do listen to God the Holy Spirit in order to understand the specific call on your life and make every effort to obey Him.

"Stay in your lane". Do not be a copycat. God has given you a measure of grace for the specific tasks He has for you. It is dangerous and disruptive to choose or strive for something different, especially within the Church of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the director and distributor of gifts and responsibilities.

Examples:

Joshua & Caleb

Moses & Aaron

Samuel & Saul Etc.

Session 3: Kingdom work

Work is God's idea. It is evident that God works, and He expects humans to work.

Jesus made this comment to the Jewish leaders who were persecuting Him:
'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.'

When God created Adam, he gave him responsibility to tend the garden of Eden.
The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Work was a gift from God and all of God's gifts are good.

When Adam sinned and was punished as a result, work became very difficult and unrewarding. The idea that work is a necessary evil persists, even among believers.

For those who have put their faith in Jesus, it is important to realise that all of their work matters to God, whether it is at home, in the local church or in the world at large.

Restoring a biblical attitude to work

Reflection/discussion

Why do you work?

Ephesians 4:28

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Work and rest

Consider the principle of resting one day per week.

Periods of extended rest - e.g. holidays



The place of money

Luke 16:10-14

1 Timothy 6:10

Opportunities to grow

Working with all sorts of people is challenging. Learning to handle these challenges well will result in personal growth and development.

Opportunities to bless others

Ephesians 4:28

James 2:14-16

Session 4: School of adversity

We learn from the word of God that He wants people to grow. The challenges that God allows into our lives are opportunities to grow in godly character and be more effective in reaching our God-given potential, especially in demonstrating our love for Him in obedience and love for others in very practical ways.

Many believers are able to see with hindsight how much they grew towards maturity in times of adversity. Recalling these blessings in adversity encourages us to face any future challenges with faith and confidence and the expectation that there are many blessings for overcomers.

The example of Joseph

Joseph was only a young man when his brothers plotted to kill him, and eventually sold him into slavery. He suffered deeply from the rejection of those who should have loved and cared for him. His deep suffering was revealed in his brothers' comments later on:

They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."

Genesis 42:21^{NIVUK}

God used Joseph's adversities to train him and deploy him into a powerful position where he worked to ensure the survival of so many, including the very people that were so cruel to him.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. 'We are your slaves,' they said. But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'

Genesis 50:18-20^{NIVUK}



Practical application

1. Reflect on/share personal testimonies of adversities that became blessings.
2. How do these past experiences help you to deal with current challenges?

Session 5: The harvest field

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

Matthew 9:36-38^{NIVUK}

Following this observation, Jesus sent out all His disciples to go and preach the gospel of the kingdom and authorized them to demonstrate the power of the kingdom by bringing healing and deliverance to suffering people.

Jesus had compassion on people who were lost. He still does. He came to seek and save the lost and He wants His disciples, His workers, to go into the 'harvest field'. If we are indeed disciples of Jesus, we must understand that has given us access to various 'harvest fields' because He has compassion on those who have not put their hope in Him and are therefore lost.

Reflection/discussion

Principles from Luke 10:1-20

As we obey God, seeing wherever He has put us as a "harvest field" for Him, what can we learn from the principles set out in Luke 10:1-20.

- Jesus sent out all His disciples.
- He sent them two by two.
- What could "lambs among wolves" mean?
- What about provision of personal needs?
- What could the instruction "do not move from house to house" mean in our day?
- What about responding to rejection?
- Any other observations?



It is very important to note that our apparent success in the harvest field should not become the focus of our joy. We must remember Jesus's warning:

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

Matthew 9:36-38^{NIVUK}

Session 6: Workers in the vineyard

Matthew 20:1-15

The parable of workers in the vineyard has important lessons for us all, as all Jesus's parables do.

In summary, the owner kindly provided work for all the available and willing labourers so that no one was left out. He agreed the wage with each labourer and honoured his contract with each. However some overlooked the kindness and provision of the owner and began to grumble against him, focusing instead on their own selfish interests. The issues at stake are found in the owner's response:

'But he answered one of them, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"

Matthew 20:13-15^{NIVUK}



The key issues here are:

- The owner invited all to work for him.
- The grumblers implied that the owner was unfair, in other words, unjust.
- The grumblers were envious of those that they considered undeserving but received generosity and mercy from the owner.

The parable is about the Kingdom of Heaven, so God is the landowner. We are the labourers and all of us have been given work to do. We should be grateful that He has given each person work to do and that He is always just in rewarding each person accordingly. We should focus on what we are called to do and not be envious of others.

Reflection/discussion

Are you aware of what God has called you to do in His household?

Are you content with the part God has assigned to you?

What is your attitude towards other labourers in God's household?

Remember that it is God that we are all serving, in whatever role He has assigned us, and He will reward each person for their obedient work.

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

Matthew 20:13-15^{NIVUK}

Session 7: Bloom where you are planted

In Acts 1:8, Jesus made it clear to the disciples that the Holy Spirit will empower them to be His witnesses everywhere, beginning with their immediate location, in their case Jerusalem. Indeed Paul was used by God to be a witness to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus everywhere he was, including when he was earning his living as a tentmaker and even in prison in Rome.

Sometimes believers keep waiting for whatever they perceive to be the right conditions before they can be witnesses for Jesus. The examples in the Bible, in both the old and new testaments, show that we are to live according to God's purpose wherever we are, demonstrating His love; living witnesses who are not afraid to give the reason for the hope we have.

Reflection/discussion

The example of Daniel

Daniel was a powerful witness for God in very adverse conditions. God demonstrated His Sovereignty and power over and over again in the then most powerful idol-worshipping kingdom through Daniel.

Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: 'May you prosper greatly! 'I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. 'For he is the living God and he endures for ever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.

Daniel 6:25-26^{NIVUK}



Reflect on/discuss other examples and testimonies

Practical application

Do good works wherever you are and also train yourself in the knowledge of Truth.

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened. 'But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 1 Peter 3:13-17^{NIVUK}

Session 8: Seek His kingdom first

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

'And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:25-34_{NIVUK}

This is a well-known text. It is very important for believers to take note of and live by what our Lord Jesus commanded here. It would take unhealthy stress out of our daily work and enable us to enter and remain in God's rest.

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

Hebrews 4:9-11_{NIVUK}

Practical application

Share testimonies that demonstrate the immense benefits of seeking God's Kingdom first.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7_{NIVUK}



Session 9: Prompted by love

We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3^{NIVUK}

Labouring for the good of others is not easy, especially when the effort and sacrifice are not appreciated, which is often the case. Also, there may not be immediate and apparent "fruit" from such labour. It is a real possibility to become disillusioned and to give up on doing the "good works" that God has called His children to do, and move into self-protection mode. Many sincere children of God have given up, allowing the betrayals, hatred, ingratitude, and the different types of persecution they have suffered to take them out of action. Sinful attitudes and behaviour may then take hold.

Our Lord Jesus endured such opposition and rejection from those He came to save. We are to consider that He persevered, enduring the cross. Humanity owes all to the steadfast love of God! **Hebrews 12:1-4**

Faithful servants through the ages were motivated by such extraordinary love for others.

Reflection/discussion

Consider:

Moses who prayed to God not to destroy the people of Israel when they sinned by worshipping the golden calves. These were the same people who often grumbled against Him. Moses also cried out to the Lord to heal Miriam when his siblings grumbled against him, and God punished her with leprosy.

Paul and Silas overlooked the ill-treatment at the hand of the jailer and focused on bringing the good news to him and his household. **Acts 16:16-34**

Martyrs who gave up their lives in order that the Truth be known and passed on.



The only motivation that will keep us going is love, love for God and love for people.

From 2 Corinthians 5:

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God.

Session 10: Enduring work

It is clear to all that this Earth in its current state will not last forever. The constant process of things “falling apart” is an indication of the temporary nature of earthly “treasures”. The ruins of castles and earthly kingdoms, which had once cost so much in terms of lives and resources reveal how ultimately pointless it is to focus one’s life solely on amassing treasures on Earth.

Even so, God’s will for people is that they should engage in useful work and to manage physical and material resources wisely and responsibly. It is necessary for children of God learn from scriptures how to maintain the right balance; being in the world but not of the world. It is only then that their work will endure, beyond this temporary world.

Jesus prayed for His disciples:

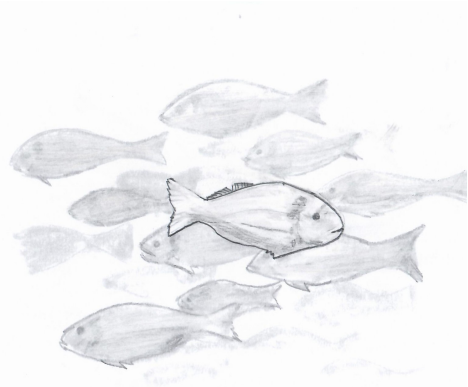
My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

John 17:16-19_{NIVUK}

Reflection/discussion

What does it mean, in practice, to be “in the world but not of the world”, with regards to work?

- Maintain the right attitude of heart
Matthew 6:19-21
Luke 12:13-21
- Focus on reward from God
Colossians 3:22-25
Matthew 10:42
1 Corinthians 15:58
- Be a faithful and wise “manager”
Luke 12:32-48



The Lord answered, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Luke 12:42-44_{NIVUK}

Session 11: The blessing of contentment

A sure sign that a believer is not fully submitted to God in everything is a lack of contentment.

Consider the following promises of God:

So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Matthew 6:31-34^{NIVUK}

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose..

Romans 8:28^{NIVUK}

Those who truly put their trust in God are confident that God will keep these promises, which are conditional. They focus on meeting the conditions.

Therefore those who seek God's kingdom first and His righteousness (godliness); those who love Him and are demonstrating that love by obeying Him; those who are committed to serving Him in line with His purpose, will have the blessing of contentment in every circumstance. They are at rest in God.

Reflection/discussion

The example of Paul the apostle

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:10-13^{NIVUK}



Paul's letter to Timothy

1 Timothy 6:3-10

Let us make every effort to do the good works God has called us to do according to His purpose; working hard through the grace He has given us, but from a position of rest in Him, leaving the outcomes to Him, so that we may enjoy the great blessing of contentment.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 Timothy 6:6