

Work and the Image of God

Victory Life Church, Durant MDWK — Wednesdays, February 12, 2025

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.¹

Genesis 1:26-28 (ESV) Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our **likeness**. And let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man **in his own image**, in the image of God he created him; **male and female** he created **them**. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and **subdue** it, and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Humans made in God's image means "representation" and "rule" in *partnership* (Genesis 1:26-28)

To *rule* is to *work*. Work is intrinsic to what it means to be human.

"Life without work would not be worthy of human beings."²

Personal Character — Personal Responsibility — Partnership Together

Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV)¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:31 (ESV)³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2:2–3 (ESV)² And on the seventh day God finished his **work** that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Genesis 2:5-8 (ESV) When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and **there was no man to work the ground**, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— then the Lord God **formed** the man of **dust** from the ground and **breathed** into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. And **the Lord God planted a garden** in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

¹ The Westminster Shorter Catechism

² Westermann, C., *Genesis 1–11*, Tr. Norman E. Wagner. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968, 220. Cited in K. A. Mathews, [Genesis 1-11:26](#), vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 209.

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to **work** it and **keep** it.

Exodus 20:8–11 (ESV)⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your **work**, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a **Sabbath to the Lord** your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord **blessed** the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Proverbs 22:29 (ESV)²⁹ Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

Proverbs 24:27 (ESV)²⁷ Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to **work** it and **keep** it.

“The word translated *work* is *‘ābad*, the normal Hebrew verb meaning “to serve.” The man is placed in the garden as servant. He is there not to be served but to serve. The second verb—*keep* or “tend” (Heb. *šāmar*)—carries a slightly different nuance. The basic meaning of this root is “to exercise great care over,” to the point, if necessary, of guarding.”

“Work” (a’vād) - to serve, to till, to toil, to accomplish

Proverbs 12:11 (ESV)¹¹ Whoever **works** his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.

Proverbs 28:19 (ESV)¹⁹ Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.

Deuteronomy 28:39 (ESV)³⁹ You shall plant vineyards and **dress** them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them.

Exodus 3:12 (ESV)¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall **serve** God on this mountain.”

Exodus 3:12 (NLT)¹² God answered, “I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will **worship God** at this very mountain.”

Exodus 4:23 (ESV)²³ and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may **serve** me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’ ”

Psalm 2:11–12 (ESV)¹¹ **Serve** the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

“Keep” (Hebrew - “shamar”) - guard; to protect, attend to, take heed, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save wait for, watch, as in a “watchman.”

Genesis 17:9 (ESV)⁹ And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall **keep** my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

Genesis 18:19 (ESV)¹⁹ For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to **keep** the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

Genesis 30:31 (ESV)³¹ He said, “What shall I give you?” Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything. If you will do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and **keep** it:

Exodus 31:13 (ESV)¹³ “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall **keep** my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.

Exodus 34:12 (ESV)¹² **Take care**, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst.

Numbers 1:53 (ESV)⁵³ But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the people of Israel. And the Levites shall **keep guard** over the tabernacle of the testimony.”

Deuteronomy 5:1 (ESV)¹ And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and **be careful** to do them.

Psalm 17:8 (ESV)⁸ **Keep** me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings,

Psalm 37:28 (ESV)²⁸ For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are **preserved** forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.

Psalm 91:11 (ESV)¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to **guard** you in all your ways.

Psalm 89:28 (ESV)²⁸ My steadfast love I will **keep** for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.

Psalm 119:9 (ESV)⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By **guarding** it according to your word.

Psalm 121:3–4 (ESV)³ He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴ Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Psalm 121:3–4 (NLT)³ He will not let you stumble; the one who watches over you will not slumber. ⁴ Indeed, he who watches over Israel never slumbers or sleeps.

Psalm 127:1 (NLT)¹ Unless the Lord builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted. Unless the Lord protects a city, **guarding** it with sentries will do no good.

Proverbs 13:3 (ESV)³ Whoever guards his mouth **preserves** his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

Proverbs 19:16 (ESV)¹⁶ Whoever **keeps** the commandment **keeps** his life; he who despises his ways will die.

Proverbs 29:18 (ESV)¹⁸ Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who **keeps** the law.

Proverbs 29:18 (NLT)¹⁸ When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild. But whoever **obeys** the law is joyful.

Proverbs 29:18 (MSG)¹⁸ If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; But when they **attend** to what he reveals, they are most blessed.

Genesis 2:16-17 (ESV) And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “**You may surely eat** of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Work is where humans exercise **moral judgment**, which requires **wisdom**.

Proverbs 9:10 (ESV)¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of **wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

“Before the Fall, mankind were gardeners; after the Fall, mankind became farmers.” Our “labor” becomes “toil,” and the fruit of our labors comes from the sweat of our brow.

Genesis 3:6 (ESV) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be **desired to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:17–19 (ESV) ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ **cursed is the ground because of you; in pain** you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The **environment** of work is made more difficult by sin

Genesis 3:23 (ESV)²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to **work the ground** from which he was taken.

“Work is a God-given assignment and not a cursed condition. It was sin that spoiled the pristine relationship between the man and his environment, making work a toilsome chore that became a requirement for mere existence.”³

Genesis 5:29 (ESV)²⁹ [Lamech] called his name Noah, saying, “Out of the ground that the Lord has cursed, this one shall bring us **relief** from our work and from **the painful toil** of our hands.”

Exodus 20:4–6 (ESV)⁴ “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or **serve** them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and **keep** my commandments.

Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV) Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in **the work of the Lord**, knowing that **in the Lord your labor is not in vain**.

Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 22:1-5 (ESV) Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Mark 10:42–45 (ESV)⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise

³ K. A. Mathews, [Genesis 1-11:26](#), vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 209.

authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 6:9–10 (ESV)⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.