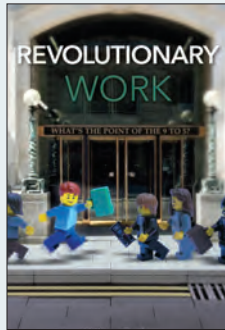


Revolutionary Work: What's the point of the 9 to 5? *William Taylor*

Paperback, 115 pp., 10 Publishing
ISBN: 9781910587997



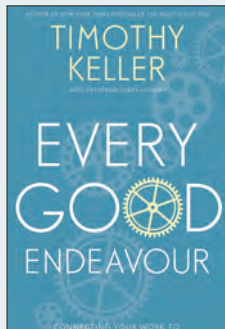
Garden City: Work, Rest, and the Art of Being Human *John Mark Come*

Paperback, 338 pp., Zondervan
ISBN: 9780310347569



Every Good Endeavour: Connecting your Work to God's Plan for the World *Timothy Keller*

Paperback, 288 pp., Hodder & Stoughton
ISBN: 9781444702606



I take it that Jesus worked as a carpenter... but I've no reason to think that his work transformed the Judean furniture industry and I'm pretty sure he could have done that if he'd been the best carpenter he could be'

So quotes William Taylor, author of *Revolutionary Work*. Short and easy to read, this book based on four sermons gives a light yet punchy overview of biblical work. However, light on word count does not mean light on content, and Taylor's conclusions are a real challenge to ideas often ingrained in us as medics.

Beginning with 'What is the point of work?' we see all work is dignified and given by God, who is himself a worker. We are challenged to recognise the false pride that so easily creeps inside us and whispers that we are superior to others, either for the good we do or the knowledge and learning required to do it. Taylor calls his reader to avoid work snobbery, and reflect on 'if I were made redundant tomorrow, would I be prepared to work at anything, and still think it was of equal value?'

Further on, we see Taylor's rejection of the cultural mandate, be fruitful and multiply,¹ following man being cast out of Eden. He concludes that in a fallen world, work will always be grim, and the best we can now hope for is a tenuous and unsatisfying dominion over the world, a feeling which anyone who has worked a night shift in A&E can no doubt empathise with.

The book strongly argues against popular thinking that work will fulfil all our dreams, give us any real sense of meaning, or make any significant changes to the world. That being excellent at what we do, as with Jesus' apparent missed opportunity as a furniture magnate, is of little concern, as none of what we do will last into eternity.

The book's greatest strength, that it is short and easily readable, is also its weakness. Taylor fails to define what work is, and makes some comparisons



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to references to colonial slavery that need more focus to make sense of. It frames the discussion well and I respect that he doesn't pull any punches; this is certainly no head-in-the-sky millennial snowflake festival, but I struggled with the bleaker picture painted, which ultimately left me feeling work was more drudgery than revolutionary.

Enter *Garden City*, John Comer's book that reads somewhat like a 288-page tweet. However, once I got past the one sentence paragraphs and flamboyantly dramatic style, I found an optimistic and engaging book which gives weight to both work and rest, and the natural rhythm of the two that our lives as medics can often miss.

Unlike Taylor, Comer embraces calling, and while he concedes that this is a luxury of a comparatively rich few, finding what 'God had in mind' when he made us is central to both fulfilment and contribution to the world, both now and into eternity.

Obviously written for millennials, the book places us in the role of 'co-rulers' with God, arguing that all work that contributes to the world in a positive way (which in Comer's mind covers the vast majority of what could be defined as work) is made full time ministry through us. He quotes 'there is no such thing as Christian music, because a melody can't be Christian, only a songwriter can'.

Much of the second half covers the more forgotten subject of rest. God works and rests, as should we, and as medics it's important we make time to rest, which as Comer shows means more than simply not being at work. This is an especially crucial practice given that technology has made it possible for us to work anywhere and at all hours. How much more satisfied might we be if we learned to rest every once in a while? He gives us insight into how understanding of the Sabbath has changed since it was handed down to Moses, and goes on to give practical suggestions as to how we

might take time to glorify God in our rest and to wonder at his creation.

Finally, *Every Good Endeavour*, Tim Keller's foray into the discussion of work. Keller appears to occupy a middle ground between Comer and Taylor. A job, he asserts, 'is only a vocation if someone else calls you to do it for them rather than for yourself'.

He concludes that our ultimate value from any work, therefore, comes from being called by Christ into that work. He also helpfully reminds us that work ultimately is cursed following the fall, and those times where we find work unsatisfying and more toil like does not mean we are sinful or disobedient.

Keller seems to not only want us to take more meaning out of our work than simply a salary, but to remind us how we work is as important as the finished product. Just because we are busy, or have a chance to get ahead, does not give us permission for an ends-justify-the-means approach. Although self-interest is not wrong in itself, Keller shows, conducting ourselves in a Christ-like way is more important than either selfish gain or even company prosperity.

This book is the clearest and most encouraging about the sacred-secular divide, cutting away at the separation which begins as a desire to make disciples, but can rob our work of its meaning. Whether reading a Bible or a textbook, our work is no less part of building God's kingdom.

Ideally, read all three books. They give an excellent contrast to one another. If you are new to the topic all together, Keller may give the most well-rounded and grounded view. Comer thrilled me, Taylor challenged me, and all three felt like they brought me closer to understanding how to live out Jesus' ultimate desire for me through work. ■