

# Identity & Work

Notes from talk given at Macquarie Anglican -  
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## 2 Questions

1. How do we find work that is meaningful to us in a time precious world?
2. How can I still keep my Christian identity at work?

Talk is based upon Ch 1-4 of Gospel Centred Work by Tim Chester.

## Work as Self-actualisation

- The most common thing we hear about work is **Do what you love** – Richard Branson says “There is no greater thing you can do with your life and your work than follow your passions – in a way that serves the world and you.”
- Ambitious work - “changing the world” – University & Tafe says “be ambitious” “Choose your own path” and Find a degree that arms you for a thriving career.
- **Meaningful Work** – Do work that matters. It’s a good thing, but as [Sheridan Voysey](#) points out, this trend is about staff retention: “Employees are spending so much time at the office these days they want to feel that at least their company is doing something meaningful for the world even if they don’t feel they personally are.”
- There’s problems though - The grind of finding work

Find Work  
(what we do)



Find identity  
(who we are)



Our fulfilment  
& value

## 1. God Works

- Genesis 1: verses 1, 3-5, 10b “In the beginning God **created** the heavens and the earth.”  
And God said, “**Let there** be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was **good**, and he separated the light from the darkness. **God called the light “day,”** and the **darkness he called “night.”** And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

“And God saw that **it was good.**”



- Genesis 1:26-28 “Then God said, “Let us make mankind **in our image**, in our likeness, **so that they may rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

So God created mankind in his own image,  
**in the image of God he created them;**  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

- Psalm 104 : 22-23 “The sun rises, and they steal away;  
[the animals] return and lie down in their dens.

Then people go out to their work,  
to their labour until evening.”

- Psalm 8:4-6 “ ***what is mankind that you are mindful of them,  
human beings that you care for them?  
You have made them a little lower  
than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.  
You made them rulers over the works  
of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet...***”



## 2. Nothing Works

Sin has corrupted the good things of work which has made work tiring, painful, & purposeless.

- Genesis 3:17-19 - “Cursed is the ground because of you;  
**through painful toil** you will eat food from it  
all the days of your life.  
It will produce **thorns and thistles** for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.  
By the **sweat of your brow**  
**you will eat your food**  
until you return to the ground,  
since from it you were taken;  
for dust you are  
and to dust you will return.”
- Ecclesiastes 2:17-19 - So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

- Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 - A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the **hand of God**, for without him, **who can eat or find enjoyment?**
- **Psalm 8:4-6** – *“what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?  
You have made them a little lower than the angels  
and crowned them with glory and honor.  
You made them rulers over the works of your hands;  
you put everything under their feet...”*

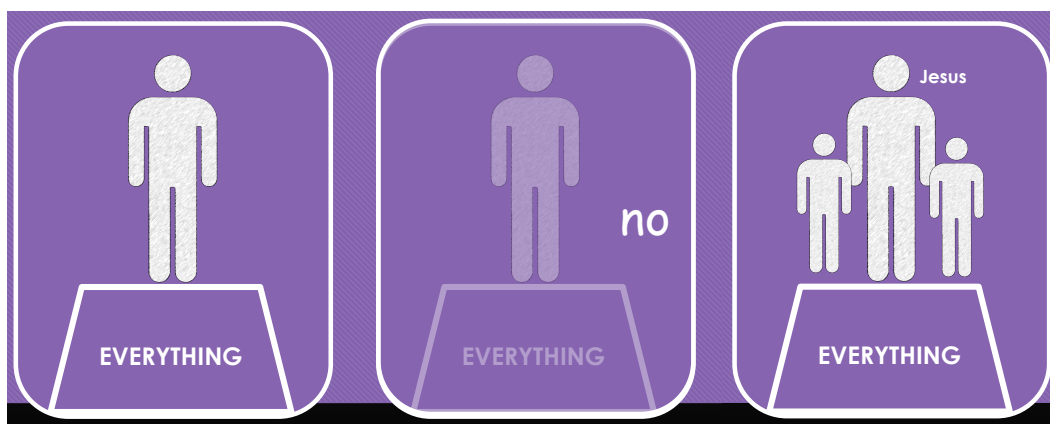
### 3. Jesus Work & Our New Work

Christ himself gives us a new identity and value. Jesus is our boss & our fellow worker, & takes delight in our work.

- **There are differences between the NIV 2011 and the NIV 1984 versions of Psalm 8:**

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| <p><b>NIV 2011: what is mankind that you are mindful of them, <u>human beings</u> that you care for them?</b></p> <p>You have made them a little lower than the angels<br/>and crowned them with glory and honor.<br/>You made them rulers over the works of your hands;<br/>you put everything under their feet...</p> | <p><b>NIV 1984: what is mankind that you are mindful of them, <u>a son of man</u> that you care for them?</b></p> <p>You have made them a little lower than the angels<br/>and crowned them with glory and honor.<br/>You made them rulers over the works of your hands;<br/>you put everything under their feet...</p> |
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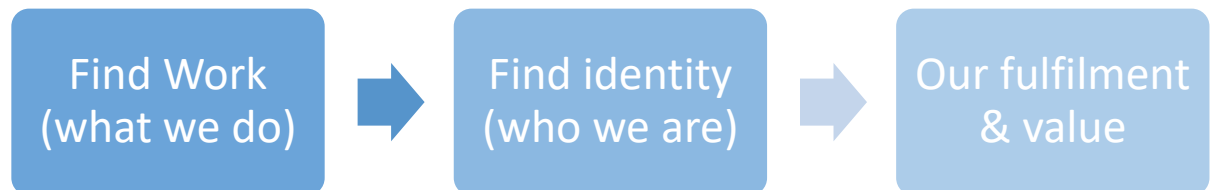
- **Hebrews 2:8-9 (and onwards)** - In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.



- **Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-10** - But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

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.

Self Actualisation Path



Jesus' Path



- **Colossians 3:23-4:1** - Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. **Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord**, not for human masters, since you know **that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.** Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favouritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, **because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.**

## 2 Questions (Application)

1. **How do we find work that is meaningful to us in a time precious world?**
  - Are we... Prioritising the Gospel? Please God? Participating in the world? (see Tim’s talk on ambition)
  - Three Models –
    - **Mission Lifestyle** - having work to support doing Christian mission.
    - **Income Generation** - intentionally working to generate income to financially support Christian mission & churches. (not for self)
    - **Cultural Profit** - Developing business to support local community.
2. **How can I still keep my Christian identity at work?**
  - Yes you can! See <https://www.leanership.org/post/being-a-christian-in-the-real-world-a-playbook> as one frame work.