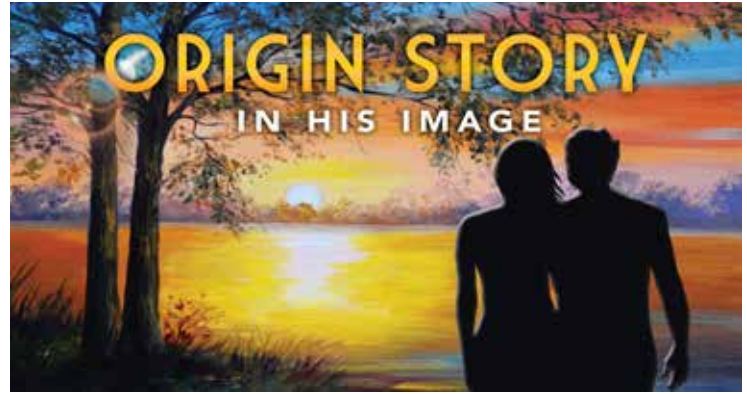


## WEEK OF JULY 23



DAY

1

### God the Gardener Genesis 1:11–13, 2:8

Genesis 2:8 says, “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden.”

One of the first things God did in creation was to get his hands dirty in the soil he had made. God worked. He planted a garden! Consider what a gardener actually does (and we learn a lot about what work is from this).

- A gardener takes what is already created (dirt, seeds, etc.) and cultivates, expands, and develops them.
- A gardener tends to/cares for the crops.
- A gardener waits a various amount of time for the crops to be ready.
- A gardener harvests and then provides produce for people to be nourished.

If we are indeed made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–28), wouldn’t it make sense that we would also work in the way of a gardener?

As we consider the nature of work in the creation account this week, here are some important questions for all of us to consider:

1. What is your attitude toward work in general? Where did you learn that attitude?
2. Do you more live by the motto “I live to work” or “I work to live”? And what do you think the difference is between these two mottos?
3. Do you like the work that you do currently? Why or why not?

DAY

2

### The Meaning of Work Genesis 2:2; Psalm 90:17

*By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.* (Genesis 2:2)

This is a bit of geeky Hebrew, but hopefully it will be helpful.

In the creation account, when God works the Hebrew word used is *MELAKAH* and this is always good (*TOV*). *Melakah* has a rich and diverse meaning: to create, to serve, even to worship.

When humans work there are multiple words to describe it (“*to tend*” in Gen. 2:15, “*to toil*” in Gen. 3:17, “*to till*” in Gen. 4:12).

Why does this matter? Because God’s work of creation (*MELAKAH*) is the cause for and flows into all other forms of work. The work that each of us is called to is a result of God’s FIRST work.

Today, as you work, consider the ways to describe that work:

- To tend
- To keep
- To teach
- To protect
- To create
- To clean and maintain
- To build

What is the work God has called you to today because of his good work in creation? How is he empowering you to be a blessing in your work today?

Pray Psalm 90:17: *May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands.*

## DAY 3

### Two Extremes for Work Proverbs 12:11, 12:14, 14:23, 18:9

Proverbs 21:25 bluntly says, *“The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.”*

In our modern world we often live in one of two extreme ways. One is the way of the workaholic. This person lives to work in a real sense. The other extreme is the way of the sluggard, according to Proverbs. That is the person who refuses to work, or at least is reluctant to do so.

What is your primary motivation to work? Likely a paycheck. Perhaps to serve or assist people. Maybe for status. Or as a creative outlet or a challenge (many business owners are motivated by this).

Do you “live to work” or “work to live.”? There is an important priority and distinction here.

You may spend 25% or more of your week at your job; that is, doing work. It makes sense that work should be meaningful, fulfilling, in service to others, and especially honoring to God.

The proverbs point out that the person who works wholeheartedly, with honesty and contentment, will be blessed by God. This is NOT a promise of riches, but rather of God’s presence with us as we work.

Today, reflect on how fulfilling your work is to you. Do you work too much? Or too little? What is something Jesus is impressing on your heart about your work?

## DAY 4

### Work and Sabbath Genesis 2:4, Exodus 20:9

“Unless one learns how to relish the taste of Sabbath ... one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come.”  
—Rabbi Abraham Heschel

On the seventh day God rested from all the work he had been doing. What an incredible idea! Within creation God established a rhythm between work and sabbath.

This likely makes us feel embarrassed about the pace of our lives in the 21st century, where stores are open 7 days per week and there is little regard for breaking the cycle of busy-ness. All of our busy-ness is not work-related, but as modern people we have figured out how to run ourselves ragged!

So, what is your work/rest balance? Or imbalance?

Ask yourself some reflection questions:

- What is my rhythm to stop working and to have sabbath?
- What part of my work do I need to recover from, so that it's important I have a sabbath?
- How does God want me to be in community in regard to this rhythm of work and sabbath? Who needs to be on this

## PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

*You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.*

**Day 1:** How do you feel about your job? Do you like the work that you are currently doing? How do you feel about work in general? Is it just a way to make money, or do you want to feel passionate about it as well?

**Day 2:** What can you do this week to be a blessing at your workplace? How do you represent God in your workplace? What can you do to be a blessing to your coworkers?

**Day 3:** How is your work/life balance these days? Do you work too much, too little? What do you do to keep your balance in check?

**Day 4:** Have someone in your group read Exodus 20:8-11. (*“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”*) Do you take a regular sabbath? Why or why not? How can you reorder your week to better accommodate Sabbath? What can you incorporate into your time of rest?