

This Truth Module addresses the workplace issue of:

Do I see my work calling as really serving society and God?



## A Worker's Calling and Society's Needs



Jim sat in his office and tried to absorb his conversation with Jack during breakfast that morning.

Jack was a respected obstetrician, and he and Jim had been friends and golfing buddies since Jim's arrival in this coastal town. The two discovered their common Christian faith, and a fast friendship formed. Though they didn't meet regularly on matters of faith, they often had breakfast together to talk about their jobs and the pressures their careers put on their faith.

However, this morning's breakfast was different. Jim's mind raced as he recalled Jack's words: "I'm thinking of leaving my practice to go into the pastoral ministry." The rest of the breakfast was spent talking through the statement, as Jack expressed a desire for Jim to offer his opinion.

Back at his desk, Jim couldn't stop thinking about it. Jack was clearly one of the most visible Christians in a community that was not particularly warm to believers. As a long-time physician in the town, he enjoyed a powerful status in part

because he delivered many of the babies born there. Among the other doctors in the town, Jack was the man many of them turned to for advice when their own lives became tangled. Even his patients found themselves seeking his advice on non-medical matters. Jack was frequently at the bedside of his patients offering words of comfort, and was often drawn to other patients' bedsides as well. It was not uncommon to see Jack in the middle of an emergency room crisis, offering comfort and support to family members and praying with them when they allowed it.

Jack's church recognized his gifts and made it possible for him as a lay person to offer certain sacraments of the church in his duties as a physician. Clearly Jack loved this role as a spiritual caregiver; he found it a welcome respite from the demands of delivering babies and caring for expectant mothers. Lately, though, a number of circumstances were prodding him into considering the move from laity to clergy. The constant threat of malpractice suits

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in complicated birthing situations was a huge stress—and a huge fiscal cost when factoring in malpractice insurance. The very threat of a suit often cut him off from patients when they most needed him to be vulnerable and responsive to their emotional turmoil.

Also, the erratic arrival of babies in a small town meant Jack was away from his family at odd hours, and he frequently found himself tired even when he was with them.

All that was enough, but even more pressing for him was a sense of “needing to do more for God.” “I take care of their physical problems, but I don’t feel like I’m having much of an eternal impact. It just seems the physical problems will always be there and I’m spooning water out of the ocean.”

This wasn’t just a crisis of conscience for Jack; he really wanted Jim’s advice.

How would you advise Jack?

## In Depth

Read the following Scripture passages. What do they say about God’s view of our jobs?

### SCRIPTURE PATH

Proverbs 3:6

Exodus 31:1 – 11

— Proverbs 3:6

— Exodus 31:1 – 11

God doesn’t call people to merely mark time. From the moment He created us, He’s been busy matching our gifts and skills with the needs of the people in His Creation and the needs of Creation itself. Every worker’s call must take into account the needs of the society where they work.

*God doesn’t call people to merely mark time.*

Every Christian is called to full-time service to God. The places where we serve will look different, but the principles that guide us are absolute, eternal and practical—even in places where God isn’t always welcome.

This means working Christians ought to have a template that helps them assess the value of the work they’re presently doing.

As a reminder, this set of studies is aimed at giving us the tools to stop climbing the ladder of success and to begin to influence, perhaps even shape, the corners of the



culture where God calls us to serve. This study aims to expand the idea that God cares about how we do our work into an understanding that God cares about what work we do. To accomplish this task, we want to take a different approach than we've taken before: we're going to ask you to assess your own views of God and work by answering some "yes" or "no" questions.

**Answer the following questions about your present job (circle Yes or No):**

- Yes No** Did I consider God in the course of picking this job?
- Yes No** Does the product or service I produce in my job offer value to the culture that's consistent with God's moral principles?
- Yes No** Does the way I provide those products or services offer value to the culture that's consistent with God's moral principles?
- Yes No** Is the marketing of those products and services consistent with God's moral principles?
- Yes No** Does my management of the budget areas I'm responsible for reflect principles of stewardship?
- Yes No** Am I making decisions that reflect concern for the long-term well-being of the investors, owners, customers, and employees where I serve?
- Yes No** Are the workers, coworkers and customers I'm responsible for being treated with dignity?
- Yes No** Are the workers, coworkers and customers I'm responsible for being treated with equity?
- Yes No** Are the workers, coworkers and customers I'm responsible for being treated with justice and, where possible, with mercy?
- Yes No** Am I resolving conflict at work in ways that honor God?
- Yes No** Am I differentiating between mistakes (the natural result of trial and error/research and development processes) and negligence (the unnatural result of not being diligent in our labors)?
- Yes No** Do I refrain from criticizing customers, coworkers and employees to others (gossip)?
- Yes No** Do I exhibit forgiveness?
- Yes No** Are the expectations of my job enabling me to meet the other requirements God gives me in life?
- Yes No** Do my expectations of my workers enable them to meet the other requirements God gives them?
- Yes No** Do my memorandums, reports, conversations, discussions, and other communications reflect a commitment to honesty always?
- Yes No** Do I pass on information that might be useful to others in my company even if it may give them an advantage in promotion or influence?
- Yes No** Do my natural conversations at work reflect the nature and depth of my relationship with Jesus Christ and to God?



- Yes No** Do I refrain from retaliation and from seeking revenge against customers, coworkers and competitors?
- Yes No** When the opportunity presents itself, do I know my coworkers well enough to describe my faith in terms they can understand?
- Yes No** Am I willing to sacrifice gain in my own career if it produces an outcome that serves others in my work culture more effectively?

If you answered “No” to any of the questions above, you probably have identified an area of your work that isn’t surrendered to God. You also probably have identified an area of your life where God wants to be working through you, or wants you to change. In the coming weeks we encourage you to seek out resources that can help you move from “no” to “yes” in each of those categories.

#### We recommend these steps to help you:

1. **Start with prayer.** Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you how to make your work useful to God.
2. **Learn to read and study the Bible yourself.** God gave us Scripture, and then He gave us the Holy Spirit to help us understand it. You don’t need to know the Greek or Hebrew of a text to understand its meaning in your life.
3. **Take advantage of and contribute to the resources of the local church.** The church exists, among other things, to equip us to be salt and light to our culture. Let the church equip you for all of life by becoming active in the life of the Body of Christ.
4. **Join a Bible study that has a workplace focus; or consider starting one if you have difficulty finding one.** There are many writers producing specialized materials that may be useful to you in a particular area.
5. **Seek a spiritual mentor—someone in the workplace who already has a solid, working knowledge of the Bible.** They will not only be useful to you in your work questions, but they can also measure their answers against the truths of Scripture.



## Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- ◆ We are called to serve God in every area of our lives, and that includes work.
- ◆ The church is the primary place we go to be equipped to be useful to God in our culture.
- ◆ God wants to work in the places where we work, and in the lives of the people with whom we work.
- ◆ God wants to work through us in the places where we work, and He wants to work through us in the lives of the people with whom we work.
- ◆ Whether we're inside or outside the walls of a church, our work is our ministry.

# What's Breaking your Rhythm at Work?



- ▶ **We all have a Work Rhythm unique to each of us**, but In our busy work lives, our rhythm with God can be overpowered or compromised by issues common to us all. Economic instability, interpersonal conflict, temptation, pride all have a way of rendering us out of tune.

Visit [www.WorkLife.org](http://www.WorkLife.org) for more on **Maestro WorkLife Coaching**, and pinpoint your own rhythm breakers.

**Explore Maestro™ today!**



**Maestro™ is a self-directed, web-based coaching system** that helps you target and overcome issues breaking your rhythm—no matter what job faces you Monday morning. Maestro™ Includes:

- ▶ A Work Issues Assessment
- ▶ Weekly email-based Maestro™ Coaching
- ▶ Maestro Truth Modules for in depth study.
- ▶ Maestro Tuning Tools for dealing with specific work challenges.



## ▶ The Top 30 WorkLife Issues

Check out these top WorkLife Issues!

Go to [WorkLife.org](http://WorkLife.org) to learn more.

<b>CLARITY</b>	Do I understand why God created work in the first place?
	Do I relate to God through my work?
	Do I connect eternal significance to my actual work?
	Do I simultaneously serve God and my earthly boss, making sure I don't "turn off" my spiritual life at work?
	Do I narrow my focus each day by setting clear limits and boundaries on my ambitions, so that work doesn't take over my life?
<b>CALLING</b>	Are my God-given talents, passions and temperament aligned to my present job?
	Do I see my work calling as really serving society and God?
	Is my work ethic free from compulsions such as: meaningless goals, accumulating temporary success, and a desire to please everyone?
	Do I learn from detours, zig-zags, false starts, and dead ends in my job to eliminate self-destructive patterns of behavior?
<b>BALANCE</b>	Do I honor my earthly employer with competency and integrity in order to accomplish God's purpose?
	Do I manage stress and discouragement by practicing the principle of rest and recreation?
	Do I manage my time without being distracted by unfocused impulses or becoming a slave to my schedule?
	Am I keeping a connection with God and my family in the midst of my hectic work life?
<b>INFLUENCE</b>	Do I manage all my resources (i.e., time, energy, talent, money) in a way that reflects God's perspective?
	Do I avoid the pitfalls of compensation and position discontentment to maximize my impact for Christ?
	Do I earn the respect of my coworkers in a way that blends a gracious spirit, keen intellect, courageous heart, and cultural sensitivity?
	Do I look for natural opportunities to talk about God that are appropriate to my workplace?
<b>SKILLS</b>	Do I effectively answer the tough questions coworkers ask me about God, life, and faith?
	Do I feel prepared to present the gospel message in language that is clear, succinct, and jargon-free, yet faithful to the Scriptures?
	Can I clearly explain the benefits of a relationship with Jesus to those at work?
	Do I regularly grow my practical work skills in order to serve my employer and God?
<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>	Am I seeking and hearing God when making work decisions?
	Do I operate with virtues that honor God (i.e. fairness, graciousness, and compassion)?
	Do I keep promises and tell the truth at work when subtle pressure is used to encourage hype, false appearance, white lies and spin?
	Am I willing to go against the grain at work when biblical values are at stake?
	Do I effectively deal with a difficult boss, serve an unreasonable client, or cooperate with a cynical coworker?
	Do I resolve conflict involving office politics, gossip, slander, favoritism, and unfounded criticism?
	Do I effectively deal with lust at work, including everything from travel temptations to office affairs, from risqué jokes to sexual harassment?
Do I protect and help the weakest members of my workplace and society in a "survival of the fittest" world?	
Do I seek out and connect with fellow believers at work for support, encouragement and accountability?	