

WHAT IF . . . ?

What If Your Boss Is Unfair and Disrespectful?

Genesis 1:1, 27, 31; 2:1–2, 15; 3:1, 4, 10–19; 1 Peter 2:13–21

LET'S BEGIN HERE

Read these quotes by Chuck Swindoll from today's message:

“We need a better theology of work.”

“Think about it. When was the last time anyone in any church that you have attended, including the pulpit or some teacher . . . seriously addressed the subject of your everyday job?”

“How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of your life?”

How often *have* we discussed and developed a practical theology of work . . . not one that creates a false dichotomy between the secular and the sacred but a theology that helps those of us—the majority of us—who are employed in the marketplace? How do we do our jobs in a way that honors our Savior? Let's dig in and create a lesson plan to develop a robust theology of work.



DIGGING DEEPER: THE GENESIS OF WORK

The first and second chapters of Genesis provide us with a framework of idealism that characterized the world before sin entered it. Even in this sinless Eden, work was a vital part of perfect, everyday life. In fact, work existed before humanity existed.

Chuck zoned in on specific verses to highlight the genesis of work.

Take notes to paraphrase Genesis 1:31–2:2.

Quotable

*Life is not divided
into sacred and
secular categories.
Everything we do is
for God's glory.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application



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Now, list the different attributes and duties of man and woman as listed in Genesis 1:26–28.

Would any of the attributes or duties listed qualify as work?

Chuck gleaned three principles from God’s creative work in Genesis 1 and 2:

- *God can do nothing that is not inherently good, so work is good.*
- *God referred to His own work as “very good,” so work has intrinsic value.*
- *Work that is originated by God has dignity and significance.*

Based on the commands God gave to man and woman in Genesis 1:26–28, what are some principles concerning work that you can glean?

Read Colossians 3:17, 23. List some opportunities in your daily life that you can purpose to not only do well but use to represent God.



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Work = Slavery?

A great resource to augment your theology of work would be *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. This book is packed with the theological depth and practical application you've come to expect from Chuck Swindoll.

In this excerpt, we learn more about the uncomfortable subject of slavery and how to interpret the principle behind Peter's first century words to apply to our lives today.

Knowing the human tendency to rebel against unfair treatment, Peter urges Christian servants to submit to their masters, even to those who are rough and unreasonable. Admittedly, that's a hard load to bear. But Peter's exhortation to submission makes sense when we connect it to our calling to shine as reflections of Christ's character in a dark, godless world. Peter makes this point clear when he brings it back to Christ's own unjust suffering: "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:21–22). When we suffer unjustly at the hands of a cruel dictator or an unfair and overbearing boss, we participate in Christ's own ministry of unjust suffering on behalf of others. Christ suffered on behalf of us. We suffer on behalf of unbelievers who need to see the gospel lived out in our everyday lives. . . . [Peter] points us to Jesus Christ as the epochal example. Christ entrusted Himself to "Him who judges righteously," and could therefore endure injustice with hope. Similarly, we can entrust ourselves to the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (2:25). In short, by following the example of Christ, we can secure an unshakable hope in hurtful times.¹



Teaching the Lesson

Let's take this opportunity to plan a lesson around the theology of work. A lesson isn't relegated to a Sunday sermon or a Sunday school class, but it is a way to honor the principle of 1 Peter 3:15: "Worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it" (NLT). This might be an opportunity through your church or over coffee with a friend. Whether you're teaching to one person or a small group, take time to prepare carefully. Here's how:

You Are the First Audience

You are the first person impacted and changed by what you teach—at least, you ought to be. Set the same—or higher—expectations for yourself that you will for your audience. Wrestle with the text; seek God through prayer; and do what the Word says: forgive. It probably won't be long before you have an opportunity to practice what you teach.



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Be Humble . . . Be Compassionate

Do you remember a time when someone shamed you or shouted at you with such fervent condescension that your heart and mind were changed? Remember that time when a person who didn't even know your name "felt led" to criticize you? Remember how "grateful" you were?

Chances are, you came away hurt and discouraged. If there was any truth hidden in that person's message, it was lost in his or her vitriolic delivery. Very few people can learn when they feel attacked. Conversely, when a person communicates love and care along with a message, we are more likely to receive it.

Humility and compassion are absolutely vital for effective teaching. As the saying goes, "They won't care what you know until they know that you care."

List the opportunities for compassion that you can potentially have while teaching a theology of work. Think about God's motivation to create a setting for humans to work, His priorities of rest and reflection, Jesus' example of work and rest, and Jesus' unjust treatment. Also, ruminate on your own stories connected to being an employer or employee—what you wish you had known.

Check Your Theology

Be careful about contorting a principle to fit a purpose apart from what the original author intended. For example, it's possible to teach 1 Peter 2:18–19 as a proof-text for slavery and abuse. That's why *correlation* is such an important step in studying a passage. Comparing Scripture with Scripture helps us to interpret what we read accurately. First Peter 2 exists in subjection to the entire biblical canon. From the time of Moses in the book of Exodus to the words of Jesus in John 8:36, God had been about *freedom*. Paradoxically, though, Jesus used His freedom to lay down His life for us.

How do you check your theology?

- *Correlation.* You can use technology or a concordance to investigate what the Bible says about work and service.



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- *Commentary.* As previously mentioned, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* provides great commentary on 1 Peter. You will also want to check a commentary on the book of Genesis for a fuller view on the origin of work. Good commentaries will reverence the inerrancy of the Bible, draw on scholarship from the church fathers to present day, engage in word studies, and give a range of scholarly theories when they examine difficult passages.
- *Context.* The context of 1 Peter is wildly different than that of Genesis 1 and 2. The apostle Peter recorded the intense persecution the newborn Christian church was experiencing under the merciless hand of Roman Emperor Nero. Most of us cannot fathom the brutality Christians suffered. Consider and make plain to those whom you teach the *depth* of faith necessary to submit to authorities and employers in that hostile environment!
- *Conversation.* We weren't meant to learn the Bible in an individualistic vacuum. Talk about the Bible with other Christians who are walking with the Lord, in environments where you are *not* the teacher.

Glean the Principles

What is the universal (true for all time) principle of the passage—the kernel of truth that must be shared? One universal principle that Chuck gleans is this: *employees should be trustworthy and cooperative, and employers should be fair and caring.*

Take a moment to think of some additional principles that would help you teach on the theology of work. Write them down here:

Know Your Audience

This isn't always possible, but it's best to know to whom you are speaking. Different audiences may face age or gender-specific challenges and may be in varied stages of spiritual maturity. Ideally, you want to tailor your teaching to that audience in such a way that they have tangible takeaways to go and *live* what they have learned.



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Who is a potential audience for you to teach? (This includes your children, relatives, coworkers, as well as more traditional ministry contexts.) How would you tailor your teaching to reach your chosen audience?

Chuck's Application: A Theology of Work in Four Statements

- *Jesus Christ is Lord over all life.* There is nothing you can name that doesn't fall under His lordship.
- *Life is not divided into two separate categories—secular and sacred.* No job you hold is unimportant or less important than another.
- *The nature of work is good, not evil.*
- *The way you do your work is a direct reflection on the One who called you to it.*

What are some applicational takeaways you garnered from the message and study?



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I am in awe of Your Son, who knew His work and accomplished it, despite the slander, setbacks, and setbacks. May I follow in His footsteps and faithfully represent Him with my work. Amen.

Endnotes

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale, 2014), 197, 198.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



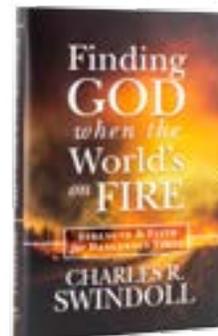
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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