

A BIBLICAL NARRATIVE OF THE THEOLOGY OF WORK

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ABSTRACT

*In this article, the investigation of the theology of work is carried through from the perspective of biblical narratives in view of the origin of work as stated in Genesis 2:15. The basis of this argument is derived from the premise that God instituted work, and that it was not the result of the human fall in the story of creation. The author further argues that work was given to humanity to be able to develop a relationship between humanity and the Creator. Furthermore, it is argued that the use of verbs in the Hebrew text, such as, bad and shamargive a description of the theology of work in the creation story. The researcher discovered that our daily work was God's idea, and it was intended to benefit humanity. **Purpose:** To explore the theology of work in the Biblical narratives and to provide the evidence that work was given to human beings to strengthen the relationship between the Creator and men. The researcher also attempts to argue that the Sabbath rest presupposes work. **Findings:** The work of humanity was introduced in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were given the task of caring for the garden (Gen 2:15). Furthermore, work was the primary focus in the prologue of Genesis (Gen 1:1-2:3) and this suggested that work was the theme of the Biblical narratives.*

KEYWORDS: *Work, Work Ethics, Poverty*

INTRODUCTION

Specifically, the author's intention in this article is to provide the reader with excellent biblical scholarship that analyses the theological foundation of work for the sake of drawing out biblical understanding on the concept of work. This idea of drawing out the scriptures is important and one that necessarily communicates how we should understand the theology of work in the biblical narratives. A genesis narrative that introduced the aspect of work was that Adam and Eve were not idlers but were placed in the Garden of Eden to "dress it and keep it" so work was a blessing. Hence, Genesis 2:15KJV gives the scriptural evidence that man was created to do some work and not to lie down in inactivity and idleness. This labour truly was pleasant and full of delight and entirely exempt from all trouble and weariness; since God ordained men to exercise in the culture of labour to enhance the relationship with the men he had created. He condemned, in his person, all indolent repose. In addition, the custody of the garden was given in charge to Adam to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition that being content with a frugal and moderate use of them, we should then take care of what shall remain. The epilogue of creation emphasises sufficient clearness and entirely the

error of those who imagine that the world was created for idleness and without work to be done. It is argued that God did not cease from the work of creation of the world until he had completed it in every part, so that nothing would be wanting to its suitable abundance.

Work: To do something that involves physical or mental effort, especially as part of a job.

Work team: A group of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common mission, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

Poverty: Poverty is a state of want or deprivation in which those who suffer it have no basic requirements for survival. The poor suffer from basic economic needs, and they are deprived of the material goods necessary to live with dignity.

Methodology

This was an archival study approach. I have used the Bible and other scholarly sources to investigate the theology of work in the biblical narratives.

Results and Discussion

The theology of the origin of work

Exegesis of Genesis 2:15

15 וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיִּנְתְּהוּ בְּגֹן־עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ

At this point, the story of creation centres, once again, on God and the men he has created. The Lord God took the men and put them in the Garden of Eden, essentially the information given in verse 8. Some translators may find it best to relate this to verse 8 by placing it in a subordinate clause; for example, "After the Lord God had placed the men in the garden..."

To till it and keep it: for till see verse 5, Keep translates a verb meaning "to be in charge of," which is used in Gen 30:31 with the sense of "to tend or take care of sheep." The more general sense is "to guard or protect." It is not suggested what the garden needs protection from. In many languages, it will be better to translate "keep it" in terms of cultivating or caring.

2:15 God placed the men in the garden for the stated purpose of supervising it. Verse 15 continues the thought of verse 8, but with a subtle difference in the language. "Put" in verse 15 translates the causative form of the verb *nûah*, "rest," and so could be rendered literally "caused to rest." In verse 8, however, the term is *šîm* ("put, place"). Here the language of verse 15 is essentially equivalent to verse 8 in context, but "rest" bears a special significance for depicting deliverance from Noah's waters (see 5:29 discussion) in Genesis chapters 1–11 and for speaking of the safety that Israel would experience as found in the Pentateuch. God promised to give Israel safety ("rest") in the land from its enemies (e.g., Duet 3:20; 12:10; 25:19). This is illustrated by Lot and his family; visiting angels "led them safely ["gave rest"] out of the city" (19:16). It also is used to dedicate something before the presence of the Lord. God prepares the garden for human's safety where they can enjoy the divine presence.

In the garden, God gives the human beings a purposeful existence that includes overseeing the environment. Work is a God-given assignment and not a cursed condition. It was in that, that the pristine relationship between men and his environment was spoiled, making work a toilsome

chore that became a requirement for mere existence (3:17–19, 23). Divine travail over their incessant labour is relieved by the creation of a human workforce.

The men's principal commission is to "work" and "take care" of his pristine garden home (v. 15). The word translated "work" (*Abad*) is the common one for tilling the soil (e.g., 3:23; 4:2, 12) or for other labour (e.g., Isa 19:9); it also speaks of "service" to another (e.g., 29:15; 31:6) and is often used of worship (e.g., Exodus 3:12). The verb and its noun derivative "service" (*ʿābōdā*) frequently describe Levitical duties in tabernacle and temple worship. It also speaks of the completed "work" on the tabernacle (Exodus 39:32, 42). "Take care" (*šāmar*) probably specifies the nature of Adam's labour. It describes the occupation of Abel (4:9), attending property and flocks (e.g., 30:31). The first instruction God gave to Adam was to work, to tend the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). It is true that this labour truly was pleasant and full of delight, entirely exempt from all trouble and weariness; God ordained that man should be exercised in the culture of working the ground.

Given the paramount importance of work in the Bible, it started in the first week of creation when God made the heavens and earth. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Genesis 2:15, (Bible in Basic English). Firstly, we find two or more verbs that describe the mission of human beings. Wright observes that "God took the human creature he had made and put him in the special environment within the earth that he had made that is the Garden of Eden" [1] God gave them a simple task: to serve it and to keep it. Genesis' account reminds us that work was a central part of life before the fall of Adam and Eve in the perfect Eden. In Genesis, we are told that God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and care for it" The Hebrew word translated as "put" (*wayyannihehu*) in this verse does not simply mean to place an object. The word connotes rest and safety as well as dedication in God's presence. God specifically put men in the garden where they could be safe and rest, where they could have fellowship with their Maker. According to the first verb to "put" the emphasis is that mankind's primary responsibility was to worship and obey God. Adam and Eve served and thereby worshipped through his work. Stephens emphasizes the two words used by God in command (Genesis 2:15) for Adam to work are '*abad*' (work) and '*Shamar*' (take care) Genesis 2:15. [2]

The verb '*abad*' means "to serve", with the connotation of doing hard work in the process of serving. Furthermore, the verb "to serve" which is a translation from the Hebrew word denotes words like "to till the ground", "to work it" "to cultivate it" the meaning is the same which emphasized the term service^[1]. The picture is painted of human beings as servants of creation and that it is the way they are to exercise their kingship over the creation. There was completeness, wholeness, and perfect bliss before Adam and Eve fell into sin. There was perfect harmony between the creation and God, the entire environment was peaceful in the Garden of Eden. Wright states that sometimes, however, the verb *šamar* means "to keep something safe", with protection, care, and watchfulness. "It means to treat something (or, these words are also used to mean "service to God" and "keeping of his commandments," respectively [3] So, humans are put into God's created environment to serve it and to look after the garden and to work. Work is a good gift from God, not a punishment from sin. Interestingly, it was not until God put humankind to work that he was able to step back and say creation was "very good" and rested. Even God's resting points to the inherent goodness of work. The All-Powerful God did not need to rest after bringing all things into existence. It resonates well that God knew that men would be

tempted to work without taking time to rest and enjoy God blessings of work^[1]. It makes sense that God rested because he knew we might forget to rest as well after labour. This makes it clear that the main point of men ruling the earth is for its benefit, not our own. In Genesis, God created us to rule over the rest of his creation by serving and keeping it, that is, by working hard in a way that will care for creation and protect its best interests.

Indeed, work is not the result of the fall, work is inherently good. Work is a good gift from God and not a punishment for sin. Despite the blessings associated with work, the Bible teaches that when sin entered the Garden of Eden, work became difficult, exhausting, and frustrating, as we all experience today. All the work which was given to us was inherently good and meaningful because God ordained it for humanity. God gave us work to serve Him and others.

This assertion is hard to comprehend that we should do work that fully expresses our gifts and brings us spiritual, mental, and bodily satisfaction. In making this comment, we are to view work as a way of offering ourselves up to God. In other words, that sacrificial view of work is almost foreign to us today. The essence of this argument is that to best glorify the Creator and to love others, Christians should do the work that God has equipped them to do. In other words, all of life, culture, and work are to reflect the beauty and the glory of God. Raynor argues that "our work becomes the expression of our identity, not the source of it". [4] The theological foundation of work takes its origins in the Old Testament's account of creation. Furthermore, work is entrenched in God's good creation story, and human beings reflect his glory through work. Lifting a spoon to the mouth is work; creating a song or a poem to express the heart is work because such activities are performed to achieve a result. We often view work as a difficult or an unpleasant activity that we are forced to perform. However, work is simply engaging in physical or mental activity to achieve a purpose or result. Work was given before sin entered the world and therefore is part of God's perfect creation. Work helps fulfill men's need for purpose. Work was ordained to fulfill men's desire and to glorify God through building our physical and mental strength. God is glorified when we participate in any kind of work which brings good results.

Work Instituted by God

God is the originator of work, as depicted in the book of Genesis. In the opening passage, God is the primary worker, busy with the creation of the world (Genesis 1:1-15). The Bible states that God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day. "Then the Lord God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and care for it" [5]. The translation option for Genesis 2:15, is one way a properly biblical view of humanity creation relationship has obscured, even by use of scripture itself. These passages reveal that God was first to do work on the earth. Therefore, legitimate work reflects the activity of God. The Bible explicitly shows that Genesis 2:15 describes Adam's vocation in Eden to work the Garden for his own benefit and God's glory. Because God is inherently good, work is also inherently good (Psalm 25:8; Ephesians 4:28). Furthermore, Genesis 1:32 declares that when God viewed the fruit of His work, and when He determined that he had done a good job, He took pleasure in the outcome. By this example, it is important that work should be productive. The reward for work is the honour and satisfaction that comes from a job well done. "The Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it." [6].

Historical Background on the Concept Work

The assertion of the researcher from the onset is to bring the impetus on the origin of work; it is also the researcher's goal to bring the historical analysis of the passages in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The book of Genesis is the foundation for the theology of work. Any discussion of work in the biblical perspective eventually finds itself grounded on the passages in this book. Genesis is incomparably significant for the theology of work because it tells the story of God's work of creation, the first work and the prototype for all the work that follows. [7] The created universe that brings into existence then provides the material of human workspace, time, matter, and energy. In Genesis, we see God at work, and we learn how God intends us to work.

Furthermore, Genesis opens with God at work, the first and finest worker in the universe. [8] On the most important note on the selected passage is that immediately after Adam and Eve were created, humanity had a God-given purpose from the week of creation. The standard way of thinking is that God placed him into the paradise of the Garden of Eden with a job to do. God had created a world that included work needing to be done; He created men with a mission to do that work. God did not need to structure the world in that way; He could have created a world that could not be worked by humanity, a world fully self-sustaining. Common sense seems to dictate that he could have made human beings to simply live in luxury and enjoy all of God's creation without ever having to contribute anything.

That, however, was not God's design. Even before sin entered the world, human beings were meant to work to help to accomplish God's purpose which is clearly stated in the verse under investigation. Chapter 3 of Genesis explicates that the damage that sin caused changed the nature of our work and our response to it; however, work itself is not the curse, it is part of our purpose as God's creatures.

Studies have shed the new light on the aspect of work, the first men's work was relatively simple and straightforward: to maintain the Garden of Eden. This purpose was lost when sin came into the world. The Bible states clearly the dilemma caused by sin after the fall and provides a broader spectrum on how work should be viewed as a part of God's plan for humanity and not as an act of punishment.

Work before the Fall of Man into Sin

The first significant statement about work in the Bible is its relationship to men before the fall of men into sin. The second perspective of work: "By the sweat of your brow, you will have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust, you will return" (Gen 3:19 NIV). Firstly, we must bear in mind that work was ordained by God. Furthermore, God pronounced "it is good" after the beautiful work of creation. It is worthwhile to note that work is given to human beings to co-operate and to work as partners under God's authority in the fulfilment of God's purpose.

God's work is different from ours. God created everything out of nothing. Any creation we endeavour is dependent on the utilisation of what God has already made. Nevertheless, human beings are made in the image of God. The examples of God at work have much to teach us on how we are to approach work. Human beings can experience satisfaction and find meaning by doing good and creative work in partnership with God. Furthermore, through work, God cultivates our personal development and spiritual growth. Work connects people for mutual

benefit. Work helps to sustain life, builds communities, and teaches love for our neighbours through the manner and output of our work. In addition to the benefits of work, it has intrinsic worth and finds fulfilment in the service of others. God himself was a worker.

Work was to benefit humanity at the beginning of creation. It was not a result of the fall.

Furthermore, the Bible records the fact that God has commanded humanity to work. [9] The fact of the matter is that work has a profitable purpose. Work is defined as “an activity that produces something of value for the people.” The essence of this argument is that the fall into sin has not destroyed the value of work but has radically distorted the world of work in the sense that work is often experienced as toil, futility, and a struggle for survival in a way that is deprived of the sense of fulfilment and meaning and is hard to connect with service to God. Even those doing good work often experience hardship and still struggle to produce good results. The standard way of thinking is that this term ‘work’ or ‘labour’ is associated with sorrow and a burdensome experience.

The Bible does not use the term ‘employment’ in its narration. While others view work as the punishment for the fall of humanity, most struggle to survive due to the hardships of finding creative work that enables them to thrive. Because of sin, some reject work, and some idolise work. We face many struggles, hard choices and dilemmas that compel us to live and work, trusting in the grace of God.

Work is Honourable

The Bible frequently records the fact that God commanded the children of Israel to work. It must be noted that work has a profitable benefit for our health, and it is a means to experience a spiritual connection to God.

According to the Ten Commandments, God says, “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work” (Exodus 20:9 KJV). In the heart of the commandment spoken by God at Sinai, the concept of work reveals that work is honourable from the Creator of heaven and earth. On one occasion, the Bible states, The Lord said to Moses, “See I have chosen Bezaleel son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skills, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts – to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and engage in all kinds of craftsmanship” (Exodus 31:1-6 NIV).

The Bible mentions Bezaleel to be the craftsman to help build the tabernacle during Israel’s wilderness wanderings after they left Egypt [10]. It suffices the argument that work was ascribed to the craftsman by God on their journey to the promised land. This denotes the importance of work in the Bible even before they reached the promised land. Work was to be a benefit to the people in the wilderness. It is an honour to work in partnership with the Creator of work. The essence of this argument is that work in the Old Testament is seen as honourable. The following passages explore the blessedness and dignity of work.

God’s Response towards the Theology of Work

God also wants us to see that work is His gift to us. It is not the result of the fall. We are in partnership with God. Since humans are made in the image of God, it is important to emulate God as the initiator of work. God gave Adam and Eve the job of cultivating the garden and exercising dominion over the world before sin entered the world. We were created to work and

for work. The essence of the argument is that we are in partnership with God. In making this comment, we are commanded to act as stewards of God's created world. We are called to work as God does (Gen 1:28KJV), and that calling does not stop at sixty-five or some arbitrary retirement age. [11] Furthermore, our work involves being participants over creation as we follow the plan of God from the beginning of the creation that we should work and be productive. In other words, work is a divine calling from God; human beings were created to work. Work was given to Adam and Eve to generate delight and to connect with the Creator in the Garden of Eden. The reality of the matter is that creation is a wonderful reality of the signature of God and on the other hand, the reality of humankind to write its signature as they participate in work, as we see that work is good. The first chapter of Genesis, however, is placed within the larger story of God's covenant relationship with creation, with people in good work. The essence of this argument is that one must appreciate that to be in partnership with God at work invokes different dimensions: work done well brings a sense of personal accomplishment as we put our God-given talents and ability to use. On the practical level, work is good because the wages we earn helps us meet our financial responsibilities to support our family members, the church and people God brings to our attention who are in need. Throughout the Bible, we see passages that condemn people who can work but do not because of laziness (see, Proverbs 10:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 KJV). When our work contributes to helping others, it becomes a means to serve God. Even though the world has been distorted by sin, work has never been a result of the fall. It was sacred and good before the fall, and it will remain sacred after the fall. According to Stephens, there are three dimensions that one must consider when working in partnership with God [12]

Firstly, good work becomes a means of spiritual growth. Many people assume that work is a hindrance to spiritual growth. But work is itself a spiritual discipline. The first challenge to Adam and Eve's spiritual growth, in this case, the test to see whether they would eat from the tree of autonomy called the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" in the Bible took place in the context of work harvesting. The human being "is so made that not only be satisfied by his material needs without working but he also cannot satisfy his spiritual needs or fulfil his function as a human being." Secondly, as co-workers with God, we do work that serves others; we experience joy and commitment from knowing that our work matters. As a co-worker with God, you must have joy in the work that you do. Thirdly, good work is communal. It is a means of building community and serving neighbours. We are called to work together in partnership. Furthermore, good work unfolds the potential of creation. The best word to describe this is stewardship. Apart from Adam and Eve, the Bible gives other Bible passages that address the aspect of work in the biblical narratives.

Work ethics and the Sabbath rest

The biblical perspective of work and Sabbath rest is God's point of view, adding to the argument, the aspect of work must be understood, based on presupposition that meaningful Sabbath rest necessitates human work. "Thus, the heavens and earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, sanctified it: because that he had rested from all his work which God created and made." (Genesis: 2:1-3 KJV). It is true that the weekly cycle of the seven literal days of creation was given to Adam and Eve. It should be noted that God designated that for six days, human beings

must labour and enter a meaningful seventh day of rest which has been preserved in the Old Testament and New Testament narratives. Therefore, the concept of work for six days and rest on the seventh day Sabbath is brought down through the ages. Having just argued that the creation of Adam and Eve on the sixth day brings the Creator God's work to completion. Henry observes that, "after the end of the first six days God ceased from all works of creation. He has so ended his work. In miracles, he has controlled nature, but never changed its settled course. The eternal God did not rest, as one weary, but as one well-pleased. Consider the fact that the Biblical narrative gives the origin of work and Sabbath rest which was celebrated by Adam and Eve on the first week of creation, since men entered the holy sabbath rest and enjoyed the benefits of working on the garden which was planted by God.

Biblical Teaching on Work (Employment)

Although the Bible does not explicitly mention the word employment but rather it uses the term work or labour interchangeably. In the context of this study, the researcher brings the biblical foundation on work or labour intending to make a strong argument based on employment in the Bible. Work plays an important role in the Bible. In making this comment, work has become hard for humanity. In most cases, we do not find our work ecstatically joyful or our workplaces particularly enriching. After the fall of Adam and Eve, work deteriorated to the point that the biblical verses below show that work is no longer a desire for the nations. Furthermore, Adam and Eve were placed in a beautiful workplace called the Garden of Eden and were given a choice. But they did not seek the expression of God-ward dependence and gratitude in the context of work and relationship. The essence of this argument is that work continued in that degraded environment from the time of Adam and Eve to the time of their first-born Cain. The aspect of work turned into hard labour in the Old Testament. In other words, sin affected humanity and work was polluted from the Garden of Eden going forth. The disapproval of Cain's offering led to the degradation of work and the murder of his brother Abel was the evidence that earth and work were deteriorating. Competition in the workplace and business is not in itself evil or wrong; it is a stimulus for creativity and initiative. In making this comment, positive competition in the place of work brings good results. However, predatory competition is destructive because one's identity becomes wrapped up in eliminating the competitor. That is what Cain wanted to do; at the end he ruined his own life. According to the account in Genesis 4:7, God offered Cain a way out, a way of acting righteously, a way of acceptance and approval. But Cain would not be persuaded even by God. He refused to repent. In this passage, to God's question, Cain replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 3:9 KJV). As a result of his insolent reply, Cain was cursed. It complicates matters further when the ground was cursed not to yield its fruit; work would be frustrating, "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you, its strength; you shall be a fugitive and the vagabond on earth" (Genesis 4:12 NKJV). It must be noted from this scenario that Cain became a wanderer on the earth, the first time we are introduced to the homeless and a stranger in foreign lands. The beauty of this passage is told in a way that we see a gracious God giving Cain a mark of protection so that anyone trying to kill him would suffer vengeance seven times over. The effect of sin in the account of creation changed the plan of God from the onset. It has been noticed that from Cain's descendants also came civilisation as we have it: commerce in "those who live in tents and raise livestock", culture - all who play the harp and flute"; and crafts - and those who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and iron (Genesis 4:20-22 KJV)." So, the global workplace has its thorns and thistles. This is the evidence of the

degradation on the aspect of work. Thorns and thistles will exist until the end of time. From the Garden of Eden to the time of Cain, the universe has experienced thorns and thistles continuously. The primordial narrative reaches what Gerhard van Rad called its capstone.^[11] The Bible narratives indicate that work was degraded from the time of Adam down to the ages of the patriarchs, although, human work appears negatively in chapter 4-11 in the narrative of Genesis. This widespread agreement regarding its care of contraction and literary placement suggests that the author of Genesis took trouble with it because he meant it to be noteworthy.

The argument on the aspect of work has indicated that Jacob was one of the prominent workers in the Bible; it describes him in its complexities and satisfactions (Gen 29:14-20; 32:10-13 KJV). In making this comment, the passages cited reveals God's interest in work. The concept of work in this scenario is that Jacob's work became a blessing to God and the neighbours. Although this is all remarkable when one considers that Jacob was a slave worker. Furthermore, it gives the impression that this is the kind of work that human beings have been induced to do in this life. Humanity was no longer in harmony with nature and things are even worse today. Jacob arrives in Paddan Aram penniless, running from his brother and searching for a wife from the extended family home. In the process of the aspect of virtuous work, his parents did not send him with the bride price. He has nothing to give for the lady he has met at the well, but his sweat. This is the passage that brings the burdensomeness of work. The passage brings another dimension to his employment. When Jacob describes his work; he uses the language of slaves. He says, "thus I was in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night and my sleep departed from my eyes" (Genesis 31:40 KJV). Later he complains to Laban, "You changed my wages ten times" (Genesis 31:41-42 KJV). This passage of scripture describes an aspect of the distorted and polluted kind of work that Jacob was doing. He further describes his work as hardship and toil of his hands, and this is not a blessing to him but a curse. Work has been pervaded by sin. It must be noted that, although when one working for the love of a woman, or a man, for one's parents or children, for one's neighbour, for the love of the nation and the love of God, any of this can transform work into a ministry.

Honest hard work can transform humanity; this is something God seeks from all of us. God's words tell us that working hard, but with faith in mind, can lead to the great things he has planned for us. Employment is part of Gods plan, and it must benefit humanity. The Old Testament passages articulate the concept of 'work' or employment as it plays an important role in human lives.

When it comes to the topic of employment, the emphasis is on the benefit of work to humanity, "You shall not oppress your neighbour, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning" (Leviticus 19:13 KJV). Since work plays an important role in the Bible, to put it bluntly, "So, Ruth worked alongside the women in Boaz' fields and gathered grain with them until the end of the barley harvest. Then she continued working with them through the wheat harvest in the early summer. And all the while she lived with her mother-in-law" (Ruth 2:23 KJV). As a result, she was able to sustain her family. Furthermore, the Bible clearly states that "you shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it so that he will not cry against you to the LORD, and it becomes sin to you" (Deuteronomy 24:14-15 KJV). There is a blessing that is associated with work "may the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;

establish the work of our hands for us, yes, establish the work of our hands” (Palms90:7 KJV). “Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense” (Proverbs 12:11 KJV). In conclusion, the Bible states clearly that “all hard work brings profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty” (Proverbs 14:23 KJV). Every man must work hard and enjoy the benefits of work. Work is essential not only because it gives us income, but it also strengthens the physical wellbeing, and it helps us to grow in all the aspects of life. The verses articulated above reveal the importance of work in the Old Testament which emphasises the aspect of work. The following section focuses on the importance of work in the New Testament as the continuation of the theological reflection of work in the Bible. As the focus on the benefit of work has been identified in the selected verses, the issues addressed will demonstrate the relevance of employment as part of development planning in understanding biblical views about work and its importance to human beings.

Theology of Work in the New Testament

Considering the aspect of work in the New Testament, the biblical narratives have the overflow of scriptures relating to the concept of work. Between the opening lines of Genesis, which portray God as a worker, and the closing chapter of Revelation, with a vision of new creation, God will continue to labour. One of the distinguishing characteristics of biblical faith is that God does not sit enthroned in heaven removed from work, willing things into existence by divine fiat. The biblical creation narrative witnesses to the interconnection between our work, God’s work, and the creation that works. Thus, human work is a significant way of participating in God’s redemptive work during human life. In God’s economy, what counts is not the human ability to accomplish and make one’s way in the world, but the ability to continue the self-giving, self-limiting love of the creator.

The focus within the Bible is not just upon God’s working but also, upon God’s people working. God’s people are called to participate in work that God sees as good and endorses. Continuing the discussion of work in the New Testament, the researcher has selected the foundational passages on the aspect of work ethics (1 Cor4:12; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:18, 2 Timothy 2:6, 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12, 1 Thessalonians 2:9-11 NKJV). As the starting point, the researcher focuses on the concept of work as indicated in the New Testament narratives. The other area of struggle in the New Testament Biblical narratives is work.

According to the context of 1 Corinthians 4:12, KJV: “And labour, working with our hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it”, work should be understood as a holistic fulfilment. Paul, in the context of first Corinthians 4:1-13, begins with an insistence that he is not concerned with anyone’s judgement of him. The Lord will judge him and that is what matters. The Corinthians have become arrogant in their judgement, forgetting that all the good they have is a gift. They feel self-reliant in the wealth and status while Paul and the other apostles live in poverty and under persecution and were thought to be scum by the world. According to the emphasis on the passage, Paul is describing the difficult life of hardship that comes with serving Christ as an apostle. The importance of hard labour for individuals helps to alleviate poverty and improves families to live better lives. Paul adds to this that it is even necessary for them to provide their way by working other jobs of manual labour on the side to supply their needy families. The Corinthians would remember well that Paul worked with his own hands as a tentmaker when he was with them. That is when he met and partnered with Priscilla and Aquila

in tent-making and the ministry of leading others to Christ (Acts 18:1-5; 18, & 1Corinthians 4:1 KJV). Despite this hardship, Paul and other apostles do not live in defeat and discouragement. He begins describing how they respond to their circumstances. Paul writes that when they are reviled or insulted, they give back blessings to those who treat them disrespectfully. When they are persecuted for Christ's sake, they do not give up. This is possible because they understand that this is what comes with serving Christ, who also suffers greatly. We are called to work in partnership and for a common goal. The part of denying the devil a foothold in our lives comes through practical actions as believers. In the context of the letter to Ephesus, theft was likely common (Ephesians 4:28 NKJV). Those who could not support themselves by trade might have lived almost entirely by stealing. That more than likely included some of Paul's readers, before coming to faith in Christ. Paul's words would have been personal for these individuals as he wrote, "Let the thief no longer steal." The first step was to stop doing what was wrong, even if it meant changing one's life. Paul then gives positive changes in this area. Firstly, the practical answer for the thief is straightforward: work and earn, do not steal. Secondly, Paul specifies that "theft" involves more than just taking physical objects from others. Work done ought to be "honest." Those who were dishonest swindlers were just as much "thieves" as those who take from others without their permission. The former thief was no longer to lie or manipulate others, but to personally work to provide for his own needs, while Paul frames Christian conduct in terms of what it allows us to do for others. In this case, an honest living allows a believer to share what they have with those who cannot support themselves.

Recommendations

Work is a gift that was given to humanity by the Creator. It is the responsibility of God's people to regard work as the bond that unites the Creator and the creatures. Furthermore, society must thrive towards understanding that work should be pleasant and should strengthen the love relationship with God and men. People must exercise their muscles by being involved in work. It must be noted that Sabbath rest presupposes work, one needs to work for six days in order to enter a meaningful rest on the seventh day Sabbath. One explanation for understanding the theology of work and Sabbath rest is that, from the beginning of time, Creation week, each new day began at sunset: "So the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5 NKJV). This is also emphasised when God finished His work, the seventh day and made holy the time between sundown on the sixth day of the week and sundown on the seventh day of the week. Even more important, in His wisdom, God knew that humanity would need one day of the week to rest and recharge. And although the seventh day of Creation week was God's seventh day on this planet, it was Adam and Eve's first day to enter rest before they had done any work, suggesting that while work is important, rest is more important. The worth of all work, paid or unpaid, can quickly be assessed by its quality of blessing, both now and eternally.

CONCLUSION

A theology of work is addressed on the creation story when God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it. I have examined the theological reflection on this article with an emphasis on the Biblical narratives of the Old and New Testament's aspect of work. The presupposition on the theological conclusion of work is that it is God's idea since God is the primary worker. He worked for six days and rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:1-3 NKJV). Human beings are co-workers with God; they must imitate their Creator by doing their work,

acknowledging that work can create an opportunity to bless others in response to God's blessings for work. Thus, occupation was regarded as a blessing to strengthen the body, to expand the mind and to develop the character.^[12]The aspect of work is to benefit humanity and bringing honour to God. Many poorly esteemed jobs are transformed when it is recognised how much they bless society. Regarding work simply as an opportunity for blessing removes anxiety about any eternally transforming function it may have. In recent times, work has become a social issue that has been debated both in local and global platforms because of its impact on society. Life without work would not be worthy of human beings.

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