

*We are in a study of the Book of Genesis. I think this is number three or four in that series. But this is going to take us all the way through 2013, and maybe a little bit longer because there is so much in this Book. So, grab your Bibles and open them to the Book of Genesis, because today we're going to look at what God has to say about work, and I'm talking about your job. And by going back to Genesis, going back to the beginning, what I hope you discover today is this: Those hours that you spend working on the job, for some of you that is 40 to 50 hours a week, what I hope you discover is that those hours can actually be invested with God, so that your job doesn't just reward you now, in the brief years that you are here on earth, but so that it actually will reward you exponentially longer on into eternity. So, that is a great investment of your time.*

*Now to set up this truth today, I want to talk to you about the power of financial investing. I'm not an expert at this, but I do want to say this. Early on in my life I learned how to save a dollar. I learned about saving and I knew about the value of saving a dollar. But folks, what I knew zero about was the power of investing those dollars. There is a difference. You see, I don't have to tell you that taking a dollar and placing a dollar into a savings account typically doesn't produce a lot more dollars because a savings account just doesn't have that kind of power, does it? But folks, that same dollar invested into a good stock or into a good mutual fund, that same dollar can then produce a lot more dollars.*

*In fact, a dollar invested in the right place has the potential to reward the investor exponentially more dollars than he originally invested. For some of you, you are going "Yeah, Rick, I know that truth." The reason I'm telling you that is that I didn't know that truth for the longest time. In fact, when I was in my twenties, I thought that because I only had a few dollars, they wouldn't let people like me invest. I thought investing was only for people who had lots of money. So I was sort of investment ignorant. By that I mean there was a huge gap between my knowledge of how to make a dollar and my knowledge of how to invest that dollar. In other words, I knew how to make a dollar, I was a hard worker, but I had no idea how to invest that dollar so it could earn exponentially more dollars and make my dollars go further and last longer.*

*Now Christ Fellowship, let me turn a corner and draw an analogy to all of that, because for a lot of Christians, they know how to spend their time in this life, but they really don't know how to invest their time into eternity. This is painfully true when it comes to those countless hours that are spent working on the job. They have no idea how to invest that time with God. Now follow me here, because when we come to*

*Christ, God not only gives us eternal life, but He also empowers us to invest our earthly time into eternal time.*

*You see, one of the blessings of being a Christian is this: The work that we do here in this life, the work that we do for God, all of that work is going to be rewarded for eternity. In other words, think of this: Every hour that you spend working for God is like you have invested that hour, because God is going to reward that one hour exponentially all through eternity*

*Now, stay with me because for many Christians we kind of know how to do that when it comes to, for lack of a better word, when it comes to church work. We know that when we work teaching, when we work serving in the church, when we work volunteering in the church, when we work sharing our faith, we kind of know that work can be done for God. Right? And we understand that work for God is an investment with God. We kind of know that God is going to reward that work that we do for Him kind of through the church.*

*But check it out, what a lot of God's people don't understand is that the work that they do on their job, I'm talking about your career, nine to five, they really don't understand that work can be done for God to, and that work can be invested with God, and that work can inexorably be rewarded by God. It's kind of sad, but many Christians see this gap between the work they do at church and the work they do nine to five, Monday through Friday.*

*They tend to see the work they do at church as sacred, but they see their nine to five work as secular, and they see this artificial divide between those two. They tend to think that "The work I do at the church, I can do that for God." But they think, on the other hand, the work they do nine to five couldn't possibly be invested for God. Kind of like I thought, Rick Blackwood can't invest dollars in the market. Many of you think you can't invest your job. You may think only preachers, people in the ministry, can invest their work. Well, so much for what we may think about our work. God tells us that both our work at church as well as our work on the job nine to five; you mark it down, both of those works matter to God, and both of those works can be sacred to God, as you are going to see in a moment.*

*Here is my proposition today, and this is what I want you to take away. Your work on your job, no matter what you do – if you sweep floors, if you are a surgeon, if you are a businessman, if you work at home as a mom in a house, no matter what you do as work, that work can be invested with God, and those hours that you spend that you think don't matter, they can matter in an everlasting way, if you invest them with God. You might be saying, "Rick, how in the world can I invest my job so that it is done for*

God. How does that work?" Well, we are going to find out as we go back to the beginning again today; back to the Book of Genesis. If you have your Bibles, open them to Genesis chapter one, and Genesis chapter two.

I want to welcome all of our campuses that are joining us by way of video. Especially, I want to Redland. We love you, and thank God for the community that you have there: the way you love each other and the way God is blessing your campus. Also Coral Gables. I love what God is doing there, and I am just so proud of the way He is using you. So Coral Gables, Redland, Homestead, let's all get tapped into God's Word.

I want to give you three thoughts about work that we learn by going all the way back to the beginning. Here they are. Number one, God is a worker. God Himself is a worker. He works. With that in mind, listen to Genesis 2:1. Here is what it says: "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. (2) By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. (3) "And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from the work of creating that he had done."

I love that, because the Bible opens with God working. I mean whistling like a carpenter, God was at work dreaming, envisioning what He wanted to create, and then building an entire universe. You talk about being at work! It is kind of fascinating when you think about it, because just like you and just like me, God worked a six-day week and then took day number seven off. The idea is, He spent a lot more time working than He did resting.

By the way, when the Bible says "God worked", that is a translation of the Hebrew word *melakah*, and *melakah*, that word, is used to refer to people working; ordinary people like you and me working. It is the same word used for God when God was at work. So folks, here is what I want you to think about: some theology here. Regardless of what you may think, work is not a curse that has been placed on the human race because of sin.

You know, a lot of people do think that work was a curse that was placed on Adam and Eve and all of the rest of us, in Genesis chapter three, when they sinned. You know, God cursed them and said "You're going to work!" No. We go back to the beginning, God shows us in Genesis chapters one and two, before the curse came, before the fall came, before sin entered into the world, God was already at work. He was a worker. And here is what I love about God. God likes to work. By the way, Jesus said that God is working to this day, and He likes to work.

*By that I mean, in the first chapter of Genesis we not only find that our God is a worker, but we also find out that God delights in His work. In fact, listen to the second verse of the Bible. It says this:*

*(2) "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the waters. So God shows up to go to work on the earth. (3) And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. (4) God saw that the light was [what?] good."*

*Mind you, the meaning there is that the light would be good for us. It would be pleasant for us. When God looked at His work, it pleased Him as well. In fact God takes pleasure in His work, and He repeats that over and over at every juncture of His creation. God would create the universe, and stars, and galactic, and say "That's good." God would come to the earth and create the oceans and the seas and say that was good. God would create the animals and say that was good. He would create human beings and say that is good. At every juncture God kept taking pleasure in His work, until finally after He had it all created, all finished, listen to what He said. Verse 31: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Folks, the idea is that God steps back, takes in all He had created, and says in effect: "That's good work. I like what I did. That was a good job."*

*You see, Christ Fellowship, there is something in God's DNA that He is a worker, He likes to work, and He takes pleasure in His work. God is a worker. It is in Him. And here is what I want you to get. Here is what you need to know. You are like God. You say, "Meaning what?" Listen to chaptr one, verse twenty-six: "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" You say, "Meaning what?" I'll say it again: You are not God but you are like God. By that I mean, there is something of God that has been put into you. It's His image. It's His likeness, and one of the ways you are like God – there are many ways we talked about, but another way that you are like God is that you are able to work. In fact, God engineered you with the capacity to work, the ability to work. With that in mind, listen to Ephesians 2:10. It says this: "For we are God's workmanship." In other words, God worked on us. We see His work in us.*

*By the way, that English word "workmanship" is a translation of the Greek word *poiema*, I always tell you that the New Testament part of the Bible was originally written in what is called koine Greek, and was translated to English, Spanish, French, whatever. But that work "workmanship" was originally written as *poiema* in the Greek, and *poiema* is the word we get poem from. I don't have to tell you, a poem is not something you make. A poem is something you create. There is a difference between creating and making something. If you create something, you engage not just your*

*back and your hands, but when you create you engage your mind. You engage your heart. You engage your soul.*

*Think of something you created: maybe a painting, maybe a poem you created, or maybe it was a doghouse you created for the dog. But if you created it, there is a part of you, your heart, your soul, your mind, that is in that creation. Listen, that is you. No matter who you are, what you have done, or what you have become, that is you. There is a part of God that has been put into you that makes you like Him. One of the ways you are like Him is that you can work. Listen to the balance of the verse. (10)“For we are God’s workmanship, (His poiema) created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” That word “works” is from the Greek word ergos. Ergos is the word we get ergonomic from, but it means business work. It means employment work. It means enterprising work. Folks, the point is this. This is where I am trying to go with you. Work is a blessing from God, not a curse. You and I were created to work and we were created with the ability to work. Don’t miss this: work is as much a human need as is food. Work is food for your soul. In fact, without work, we sense an emptiness, don’t we? Without work we sense that something is missing in our life. It is my experience that when I see people who get cut off from work, either because of physical problems, or maybe even retirement, they eventually discover that they need work. They need to do that. By the way, it is interesting: Work was given by God also to protect us. It is interesting that as soon as God put Adam and Eve in the Garden and said work the Garden, the next thing He said was “Don’t eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There is something about work that keeps our mind occupied. How does that saying go: “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop.” That’s probably true.*

*God gave us the ability to work, and one of the blessings of His creation is this: God engineered you with the capacity to work, and God engineered the world to be worked. Listen to Genesis 2:15. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” I love that, because when God finished creating the world, He didn’t create it to its fullest potential. In other words, God left some untapped potential in this world. To put it another way, there is untapped potential in this world that requires us to work it, to bring it to its fullest potential. That’s the way God made the world. Folks, one of the greatest untapped potentials in your work, and again, it doesn’t matter what you do: if you’re a janitor, you’re a surgeon, you’re a nurse, you’re a business man, if you are a laborer, if you work in a factory, if you are a mom working in the home, I don’t care where you work. One of the most untapped potentials of the work that you do is this. Your secular work can be, has the potential to be, a sacred work. I want to give you two ways that you can make*

*that happen. Number one, your work can become sacred if you work for the glory of God. Listen to Colossians 3:23. The Word of God says this: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for men."*

*You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning that whatever you do, do it with all of your heart, do it with all of your soul, and do it as if you were doing that job for God, because if you do that, if you do your work as unto God, that work then becomes sacred, and your work then is just as much an act of worship as when you were singing to the glory of God. It becomes an act of worship. In other words, if you walk into that workplace, before you even begin, you devote your workplace, pray over that workplace, you work, not for the boss, not for the customer, not for the patient, but you work for God. Devote what you are doing to Him, and work to be the best that you do, with all of your heart. The work is transformed from mundane to sacred; from secular to sacred. It is an act of worship.*

*You see folks, I know there are two kinds of workers in this room. For some of you, your work brings you a sense of fulfillment, and you love what you do. Your work is a place to dream. Your work is a place to envision. Your work is a place where you take the skills and the talents that God has given you, coupled with some learning that you have, it is a place for you to do what you like to do. You love your work. Others of you, just me talking about this is upsetting to you, because you are thinking about Monday already. To some of you, going to work is like climbing stairs. For some of you, you feel like you have been put into a trap at work. You wish you could get out of it.*

*What God's Word is saying to us here, whether you love your work or hate it, whether you feel fulfilled or unfulfilled, the truth is this, all of our work can be worship if we do it for Him. In other words, if you will go to your workplace and pray, and say, "God, what I am going to do today is going to be for you. God, I'm going to work, not with one eye on the boss to see if he is looking, to see if he likes it, but with one eye on the Big Boss". I say that reverently. If you work like that with your eye on God, you go from secular work to sacred work. You go from work that is just earning you money to work that is being invested into eternity.*

*I want to give you another way to turn your secular work into a sacred work. Put God at the center of your work. You say, "What do you mean by that?" Let me show you an example of this from the gospel. Listen to this narrative. Verse 1 says this: "One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, (That's the Sea of Galilee.) with people crowding around him, and listening to the word of God..." Stop there and let me paint the picture for you. Jesus was teaching the Word of God. Right behind him was the sea, the lake, and in front of Him were the people He was teaching.*

*When He started teaching, there weren't a lot of people there, but as He taught through that day, more and more people just started showing up. Pretty soon it was crowds of people. Not only were there crowds, but the crowds kept getting closer and closer to Him because they wanted to hear what He was saying. As the crowds grew and came closer and closer to hear Jesus, Jesus kept backing up more and more until He was about to step into the water. It is then that I love what Jesus did. Listen to what He did.*

*Verse 2: "He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets." By the way, one of those boats belonged to Simon Peter. But check this out, because for a fisherman, his boat was his place of work. That is where he worked. You go to an office, Peter went to a boat. You go to a hospital. Peter went to a boat. You go to a factory, Peter went to a boat. You go to a classroom. Peter went to a boat. This was his place of work, but all of a sudden, I love what happened, God got into Peter's place of work. He was in the center of it. (3) "He (that's Jesus) got into one of the boats, (He got into Peter's workplace.) the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat."*

*I love that. Don't miss what happened, because God had entered Peter's workplace, and when He did, He transformed Peter's workplace from a place just to make money into a place that became a sanctuary. Peter's boat became a sanctuary for people to hear the Word of God, for people to hear the gospel of Christ. You see, Christ Fellowship, if we see our workplace as a place to display the love and the mercy and the goodness of God through us, and if we don't check our faith at the door as we are going out, in other words, we have our quiet time and read God's Word, and we sort of check that at the door and shut it up and leave it at the house, and then we go off to work. And we think work and our faith are mutually exclusive, but if you don't they are mutually exclusive and you take your work with you, you take Christ with you, He is in you, then you are putting Christ at the center of your work. And when you just do that you not only turn that place into a sanctuary, but you turn it into a place where people who are looking at your life and watching how you work and watching how you live, actually hear from God. Your work becomes sacred then.*

*God can even give you a chance to speak for Him, and I don't mean chasing people around the job. God can give you discrete ways of doing this. I'll give you an example. When I was in my early twenties, I had just finished my PHD work and I was writing my dissertation. You know, when you write a dissertation you just kind of go somewhere and roll up your sleeves and start writing this thing. It takes a year or year and a half to*

*write it. That was me, so I went to work at this factory in Charlotte. It was second shift work, so it was three to eleven, and this place was pretty rough. I mean, the guys in there were rough, rough, rough.*

*At seven-thirty we had a dinner break in a break room. It was a pornography fest in there. I mean, these guys would just come out with all of this pornography. So dirty! Some of them would even go out and get wine or whiskey or whatever. They would be loaded by the time dinner was over, for the rest of the shift. But anyway, I worked there for about a year. While I was working there it didn't take long for somebody to figure out, to find out that I was studying for the ministry.*

*All of a sudden I was pegged, and they started calling me Rev., you know, for Reverend, and kind of teasing me about it. There was this one guy, I think his name was Willie, and Willie wasn't the supervisor, but he was the supervisor. He sort of ruled the second shift. He was older than all of us. He was in his mid to late fifties. Willie sort of ruled the place. Once Willie found out that I was studying for the ministry, he would sort of try to mess with me a little bit early on.*

*I remember one night we were standing at the clock, punching out. It was a Friday night and on Friday night a bunch of these guys would go to this place called the "Paper Doll Lounge". It was a nudist place. Willie said to me, "Hey, Rev, want to go to the Paper Doll with us?" I could have said "I don't do that. I'm holier than you are. You all are going to hell. I'm not going with you." Now, I could have said that, but I didn't. Do you know what I did? I said, "Willie, let me show you something", and I pulled out a picture of Rhonda, my wife. Rhonda is good-looking now, but in her twenties she was a killer. I mean she was way out of my league.*

*But anyway, I showed him the picture of Rhonda. They were all kind of gathering around. I'll never forget what Willie said when he saw Rhonda. This is what he said. He said, "Lorda Moses! She's pretty." I said, "Yeah!" I said, "Willie, why would I want to go out with you guys for hamburger when I've got steak at home?" He thought that was funny and he laughed, and kind of from there on he stopped messing with me, and I think he kind of liked me. I think he liked me because I think he figured out that I was kind of normal. I was just a regular guy. And I think he liked me because he knew I had something that he didn't have.*

*I'll never forget this one night when we were working at this machine, and he started telling me about his problems in his life. His marriage was falling apart. I was half this guy's age. He said, "Rev, what is it that you've got, that you can tell me about?" I said, "Willie, I can't tell you right now. I'm working a job and I'm not going to talk about my*

*faith while I'm working. But on break, at lunch in the dinner room, I'll talk to you about it.*

*To make a long story short, we go into the dinner room and I just start telling him about the Bible. In the end, he prayed to receive Christ as his Savior. He says to me, "Rev, why don't you talk to all of us about the Bible?" I said, "What do you mean, all of us?" He said, "I want you to talk to all of these guys about the Bible." I said, "Willie, these guys don't want to hear about the Bible." He says, "They will if I tell them they do." So I said, "Good enough!" So he got them all together the next night and I came with my Bible and we sat around the table and I said, "What do you guys want to talk about?" They said, "We want to talk about that book of Revelation." I said, "Ok, we'll talk about the book of Revelation." So during the time I was there, God opened that door and I was able to lead several of those guys to Christ, and they are serving God to this day.*

*You see, it is sad, but some Christians think the only way their work can tell is if they do what I do, work in a church. The truth of the matter is folks, the greatest work that God does doesn't happen in here. It happens out there, in our schools, in our neighborhoods, on our jobs. We have a vision to reach fifty thousand people in this city, and the only way that is going to happen is for us to be in the city, for us to be loving the city and working for the city. I'm telling you, what God desperately needs is for His people to be in the workplace for Him. God needs some Christian attorneys in the courtroom. God needs some Christian doctors in the surgery room. God needs some Christian nurses in the hospitals. God needs Christian teachers in the public schools.*

*People will say to me, "Look how bad our schools are." No wonder; all the Christians bailed out of them and went to Christian schools to teach. Don't get me wrong. I love Christian schools. I must, we have one here. But folks, we also need teachers who are out there on the forefront loving children, showing them the love of God. We need teachers like that in the schools of this city. And we need attorneys in the court room and we need Christian businessmen out there showing other businessmen how God's people do work.*

*What I am trying to say to you folks is that the hours you work that job are not just hours to earn money. It's not just an artificial divide between the work you do at church and the work you do on the job. Both matter to God. Both can be sacred to God. Both can be invested so that you draw on that work that you do eight hours a day exponentially longer than the hours that you invest. You can draw on it forever and ever.*