

Kingdom & Work: Foundational Principles



“JESUS WENT THROUGHOUT GALILEE, TEACHING IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES, PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM...” MATTHEW 4:23

“What is this?! What’s it for?” Riley asked as she picked up a strange looking tool in her grandfather’s garage. “Great question,” her grandfather responded, “it’s a thing-a-ma-jig. Actually, I wish I knew. I’ve used it as a hammer, a screwdriver, and a way to dig up weeds in the yard. About the only way it’s really been useful is to collect dust. If I knew its purpose and could see it being used, I’d probably see how it could be more useful.” Learning about somethings’ purpose- how it was intended to be used, understood, and related to- is one key to knowing how to make the most of that something.

This includes work and career in this world.

To understand work, we need to know that there is a bigger picture (God’s bigger picture.) Understanding God’s BIG story answers life’s BIG questions and is essential to understanding our own littler stories. The BIG story helps us to make sense of our own call, our role in this world’s story, our relationships, and our work. This BIG story is seen through a four part thread that unfolds throughout the Bible, revealing God’s Kingdom throughout time.

4 Parts to the Big Story of the Kingdom

Kingdom Created: Creation

Part one of the Big story starts at the beginning, of course. (Genesis 1:1-31; 2:18-24) The Kingdom of God was established as humankind as his co-rulers. (Psalm 8) God had a purpose for creating the world and all that is in it. Creation answers questions of purpose: What's the purpose of ____? Why are we here? Who am I? Where did we come from? God created people good, in His image, as workers with a need for community. They were in perfect relationship to themselves, Him, each other, and creation. He gave them work stewarding His creation. This is the connection to work. Creation answers the big questions of *purpose*.

Kingdom Invaded: Fall

But God's designed intent for Creation didn't stay in relational harmony and health. Part two of the story reveals how things got messed up in this world: why there is so much brokenness and suffering. (Genesis 3.) Humankind yielded to Satan's temptation for autonomy without God and as a result, introduced disharmony into relationships. This opened the door to Satan's kingdom invasion of earth. Creation became corrupted and relationships became broken. People are born fallen and corrupted, into a fallen, corrupted world. Now we live in a world at war: in ourselves, with the World, and with Satan. Humankind's relationship to work was corrupted, resulting in work becoming more difficult, misunderstood, misused, and vulnerable to Satan and the brokenness of humankind. (Matthew 12:26-27; Romans 7:14-25) Part two answers the question, "Why are things messed up in this world?" It defines the *problem*.

Kingdom Ransomed: Redemption

Part three of the story reveals that humanity's disobedience was the cause of the Big problem, the brokenness of relationship with God, themselves, each other, and creation. Inherently corrupted, its beyond humankind to fix the corruption and brokenness. Just as contaminated water can't uncontaminate itself without the outside help of a purification process, so humans cannot uncontaminate or uncorrupt themselves. This is where Jesus comes in offering himself as a way to make us potable. Jesus ransomed His creation and His Created (humanity) from Satan's rule, provided reconciliation for relationship, a continued call to creation stewardship, and empowerment to Believers for restorative work. This world and all in it are obviously still messed up, but Christ is in the process of restoring all things through His people. His Kingdom is here, but everything is not yet right again as the world is in conflict. Matthew recorded about Jesus, "Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum...to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: "...the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" (Matthew 4:12-17) (1 John 5:18; John 8:31-36) Kingdom Ransomed answers the question, "What's the *fix* to this world's problems?"

Kingdom Restored: Restoration

The final chapter of this four part story says that one day Christ the King will physically return to His kingdom He has ransomed from Satan. One day Satan and death will finally be defeated, all things made new, and work restored to its designed intent. (Phil. 3:17-21; Rev. 19:6-9) This final part of the story paints a picture of the *future* and answers the big life questions of "What's the good life?", "Where are we going?", and "What does "fixed" look like?"

In summary, the four chapter story of the Bible is one of God's Kingdom. Its creation, its fall, its redemption, and its final restoration. It answers the big life questions about purpose, the source of the problems of this world, the fix provided for by Christ's redemption, and the future of a fully restored kingdom. We can process work, career, and relationships through this lens.

DUAL CITIZENSHIP

So until Christ returns and restores all things, we live as citizens of two kingdoms, dual citizens. (2 Corinthians 2:2, 4:4; John 12:31) We are citizens of Christ's kingdom of light, but also citizens of the world, which is still broken. And this world is still under the domain of Satan's kingdom of darkness. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the

spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12) There are two kingdoms in conflict with the kingdom of this world in the tension. Those who have accepted Christ have taken the opportunity to transfer their spiritual citizenship. “He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14) Our change in citizenship can change us and change our destiny.

Read these Colossians passages and highlight the differences between the values of each kingdoms’ citizens.
Colossians 1:9-14; 21-23; 3:1-17; 3:22-4:6

(Mentees are strongly encouraged to explore with their mentors the four chapter concepts, dual citizenship, and how they are helpful for making sense of life and work. Read the AYM article, *CHRIST’S KINGDOM: Foundational Principles* with your mentor.)

CHRISTIANS AT WORK

Bear Fruit

As citizens of Christ’s kingdom, we are called to live and behave differently than others at home, community, and in the workplace. (John 8:31-32) We are to live by the power of the Spirit “bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father...” (Colossians 1:9-14; Galatians 5:16-26; Matthew 5; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Galatians 2:20)

Biblical worldview on work

Understanding the truth of God’s designed intent for work (its purpose) and the ways that we as His image-bearers reflect Him as a worker is essential. It can help us combat the lies about work which can stifle our impact for the Kingdom. Here are some of God’s truths about work.

1. Work is good. A biblical worldview on work is that it is good. God wouldn’t do anything that was evil, sinful, or cursed. God worked. Therefore, work is not evil, sinful, or a curse. (Genesis 3:17-19)
2. Work and worship are integrated. When we work, we are to do it as a form of worship. Avad, a Hebrew word in Bible that is the root for “service”, “work”, and “worship”
3. God created people to be His coworkers, each with a different design, to help Him accomplish different tasks in managing the creation. (Your Work Matters to God. Sherman & Hendricks) “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10)

(To learn more about what God says about work and how we reflect Him in it, see the AYM article, *CHRIST: WORLDVIEW @ WORK* with your mentor. Understanding this can be truly liberating for understanding work and calling! It can help reprioritize your perspective.)

CAREER CHOICES

God gave humankind the potential to create all sorts of things as stewards of His creation. “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:10) Understanding your design will help you discern your calling to the type of work in which you might flourish. Look for overlap in your gifts and passions, the world’s needs, and God’s priorities. Author Amy Sherman offers the below as broad categories of work that God has gifted people to do:

Redemptive work: God’s saving and reconciling actions. Occupations include pastors, counselors, writers, artists, producers, songwriters, poets, actors, novelists.

Creative work: God's fashioning of the physical and human world. Occupations include artists and craftsmen

Providential work: God's provision for and sustaining of humans and the creation. A lot of blue and white collar jobs fall into this category.

Justice work: God's maintenance of justice. Occupations include judges, lawyers, policy researchers, diplomats, law enforcement, and so on.

Compassionate work: God's involvement in comforting, healing, guiding, and shepherding. Health care, pharmacists, non-profit workers, etc... are in this category

Revelatory work: God's work to enlighten with truth. Occupations include preachers, scientists, journalists, scholars, teachers, and so on.

(For more on career discernment, as well as 9 Realities of Career, read the AYM article, *CAREER CHOICES* with your mentor.)

Ask Your Mentor (Launch Coach)

1. How has understanding the Bigger story helped you in following Christ in this world?
2. How have you experienced the two kingdoms and their citizens in conflict in your work and leadership? How do/did you live as a citizen of Christ's kingdom at work? How do you trust God in the tension of the conflict?
3. How did you choose your career? What are some things you wish you would have known when you started your work career?
4. What's it looked like to trust God with your career journey? Any advice that you can give to me?

Go Do Ideas

1. Read and Reflect. Explore these passages and highlight the differences between the values of each kingdoms' citizens. Colossians 1:9-14; 21-23; 3:1-17; 3:22-4:6. Citizenship: which spiritual kingdom do your beliefs and behaviors predominately reflect?
2. Ask God, "What's a belief or perspective about how I think that life ought to work that need realigned with your perspective?" Write down what comes to mind. Dig into God's Word to learn more about its teaching on that topic. What might God be asking you to do? What would it look like to trust in Him with that as you obey?
3. Envision and journal. What would it look like for Christ's kingdom to come to your workplace? To your relationships? Your neighborhood? Perhaps... reconciliation, redemption, renewal, repentance, revitalization, rejuvenation, repair, replenishment, release, re-invention, respect, reliving, relieving, restabilization, revival, reform, reawakening, restoration, rebirth.