

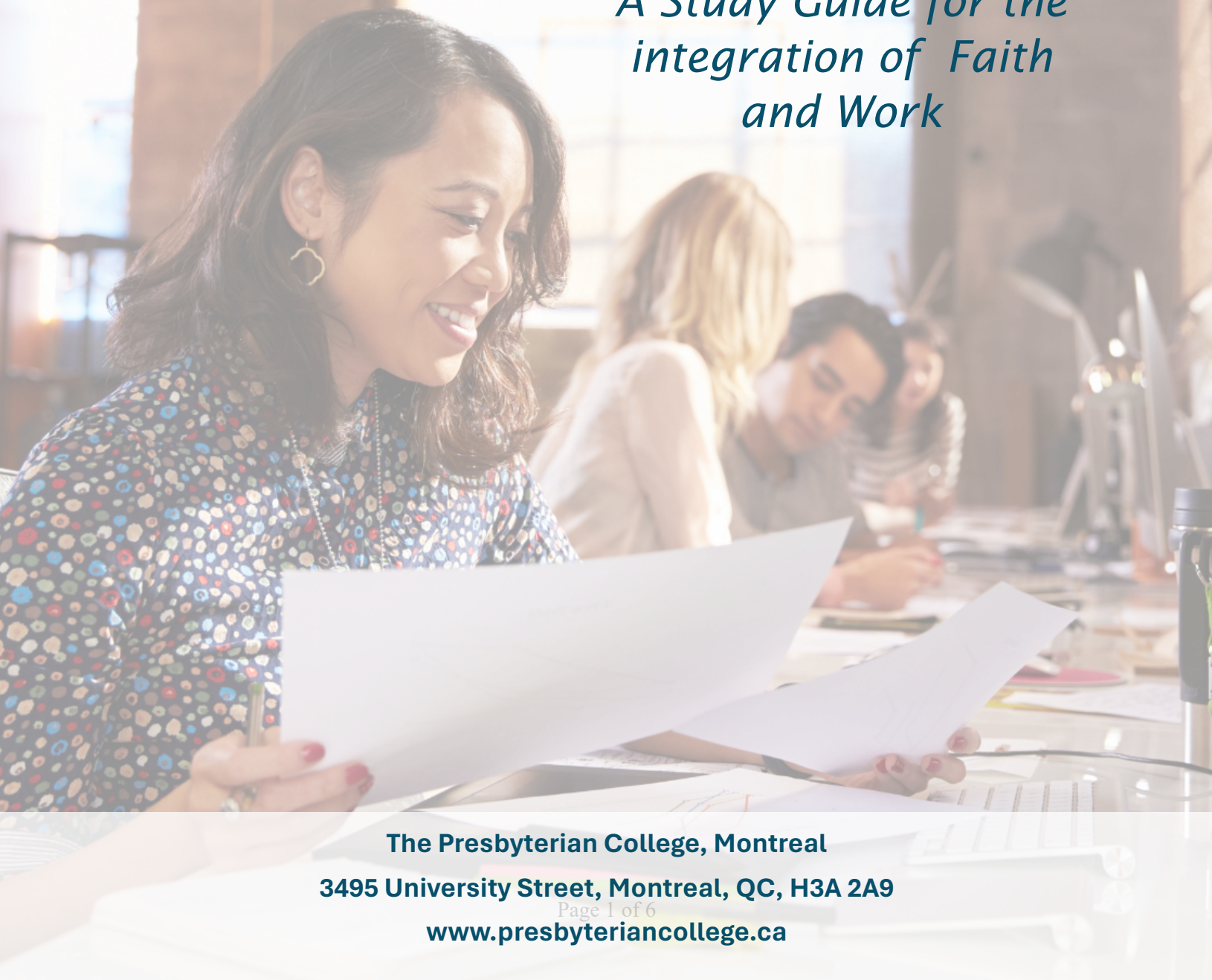


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Your Work and the Kingdom

*A Study Guide for the
integration of Faith
and Work*



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Created to Work

Session Two

I. Session Goals

The goals of this sessions are to:

- Understand how our work fits within God’s creating and providing for the world.
- Recover a sense of the goodness of work.
- Discover and reflect on how work creates culture.
- Explore what the Bible says about the dignity of work.

II. What’s the Problem? (5-10 min)

Similar to our discussion of vocation, there are also misperceptions of work when it comes to God’s desire for his creation. There are two important misconception to mention:

Work is a punishment for human sin.

God guarantees our success in work.

While the Bible does teach that sin effects our work, it also teaches that human work is a good thing created by God. When we work we are doing as God intended.

While it is true that God desires human flourishing, this should come within the context of our striving for shalom—peace, justice, and flourishing for all.

Discussion or Reflection Questions:

Have you ever thought, or heard others suggest, that work is punishment. Are there any bible texts that might make you think work is punishment?

Do you think it is common for people to think God wants us to be financial prosperous? What are some problems or dangers with this idea?

III. Watch: “Created to Work” (15 min)

When watching the lecture, consider the following questions. They will help you and your group to summarize the important themes.

Discussion or Reflection Questions:

What are the different images of God as a worker in Genesis 1?

Can you think of different ways your work provides for other?

Do you have glimpses of your work being good in itself. Do you have a sense that you using your gifts is like a mirroring of God's work?

IV. Word, Life, Work (15-25 min)

There are other themes in Genesis 1-3 that are often overlooked. Let's explore some of them together

i. The Dignity of Human Work

In our society certain types of work are more esteemed than others. In western society we tend to value jobs that provide wealth and come with a certain amount of prestige. This was true in the ancient world as well, not only in the nations surrounding Israel but also among the Greek philosophers. However, the bible challenges the idea that certain forms of work are better than others.

Read: Genesis 1:24-31

Discussion or Reflection Questions:

If all humans are made in the image God and anyone can represent God, what does this say about different occupations?

Should we give some occupations more prestige than others?

Recommend Video: "Yes, I'm the mechanic", George Zaloom

You will notice in this video that George once had a more prestigious and prosperous work, but financial problems got in the way. Despite this, he now finds great joy and purpose in serving others and God as a mechanic.

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/video/yes-im-mechanic/>

ii. Work is Holistic: Hands, Minds, in Relationship with Others

Other themes in the Genesis narrative revolve around the nature of work as holistic: work uses our hands, our minds, and is done in relationship with others. Some modern forms of work can be monotonous, boring, or isolating, but Genesis sees work more holistically.

Read: Genesis 2: 4-9, 15-17

Discussion or Reflection Questions:

How does Adam use his hands and mind?

What might this suggest about the nature of work for us today?

Read: Genesis 2: 18-25

Discussion or Reflection Questions:

What might the term “helper” mean in this ancient context?

While modern forms of work are different, what role does human relationship play in your work?

iii. Working in a Good Creation

Both Genesis stories have a fundamentally positive view of the created world and humans within it. You might remember our definition of work from the first session: work is human effort applied to the natural world that produces goods or services, we need or want.

Read Genesis 1:1-23

Discuss or Reflection Questions

What is God’s response to the world created?

What place and role are animals given? How does this compare with the role humans have?

How might work today aim to fit in good and ordered world?

V. Takeaways

God’s plan for human work in Genesis is much richer than we might have assumed. Humans have been created to work, and that is a good thing. Humans are called to create culture in a way that meets the needs of others, is attuned to the rhythms of the natural world, and therefore glorifying to God. Here are a few takeaways from our session.

i. Serve the Work

Novelist Dorothy Sayers, in an essay entitled “Why Work?”, defines work in the following way: “work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is, or it should be, the full expression of the worker’s faculties, the thing in which he finds spiritual, mental, and bodily satisfaction” (55). This summarizes well the holistic view of work seen above.

The first implication she draws from this however might seem surprising: “the worker’s first duty is to *serve the work*” (61). If work is good, contributes to societal

wellbeing, then find good work and serve it. Doing good work, in other words, already glorifies God. There is no need to spiritualize work and look for some hidden purpose in it.

ii. Expect non-Christians to do Good Work

While sin is a present reality, which we will examine in the next session, it does not destroy the way in which God created humans. This means that the image of God is found in all human beings, and we can expect good work from them. In fact, many non-believers will recognize what good work looks like and how it serves the common good. We should praise God for this and cooperate with others in doing good work.

Final Discussion or Reflection Question

Can you think of examples in which people you work with have served work.

Given examples of non-Christians around you who do good and faithful work for the service of others.

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