

THE TOTALITY OF WORK

By John Ridgway

In this study we will be looking at how the **creation** in the Old Testament and **redemption** in the New Testament play an important part in the work that God has in mind for us as citizens of His Kingdom.

In Genesis 2:15, we are told that “the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden **to work it and take care of it**”. Because of our first birth, we have a certain background that includes our nationality, our family, our language, our culture, our religion, our education and many other factors. We also have inherited a certain personality with various strengths and weaknesses. In some cases we may have even inherited a family business or trade.

Q1. Because of our first birth, we have a work God has given us to do. Write down what that work is and how you take care of it. Note in Genesis 4:2 that “Abel kept flocks and Cain worked the soil.

Q2. We are partners with God as we undertake our work. Examine Psalm 104:13-15, 23. Describe God’s part and your part in this passage.

Q3. This partnership has been spoilt by the entrance of sin. Describe the consequences in Genesis 3:17-19.

- Q4. In Nehemiah 2:4-7:3, we have a record of Nehemiah performing his work. This involved rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. How did Nehemiah see God's part (Chapter 2:18-20) and his part (Chapter 4:6, 5:16 and 6:9)?
- Q5. The woman described in Proverbs 31:10-31 was very successful in her work. What were her attributes that made her so successful? Note the use of her hands and arms as well as her mind and mouth. Verse 30 is the core value in her life.
- Q6. One of the factors that causes God to bless our work and everything we put our hand to is found in Deuteronomy 15:7-11. What is that factor?
- Q7. We are told in Proverbs 14:23 that "hard work brings a profit". What does that mean for a person's children (Proverbs 14:26) and grandchildren (Proverbs 13:22)?

As a result of our second birth, we experience the grace of God in our lives and become citizens of His kingdom (Matthew 5:3 and John 3:3). The second birth makes sense of the first birth. Now I am involved in the **creative work of my first birth and the redemptive work of my second birth.**

In Paul's day, the city of Corinth, the capital of Greece, had a population of about 250,000 free persons and 400,000 slaves (NIV Study Bible). Today we have blue collar workers and white collar workers. In many part of Asia, we have servants, maids, helpers, etc., who provide manual labor in the home.

Q8. Does your background (nationality, religion, socio-economic) influence your status or position in the Kingdom of God, Colossians 3:11?

Q9. What is Paul's advice regarding your religious or national or socio-economic background in 1 Corinthians 7:17-24?

Your first birth and your job/vocation provide a whole set of keys that will enable the **mobility of the gospel**. Your second birth provides a whole set of keys that will enable **the purity of the gospel**. For example the mobility of the gospel occurs because blue collar workers can more easily reach blue collar workers. Businessmen can more easily reach businessmen. Believers from a Muslim background can more easily reach Muslims. Believers from a Brahmin background can more easily reach Brahmins. Believers from a Buddhist background can more easily reach Buddhists. Athletes can more easily reach athletes etc. Jesus has told us to use these keys. Matthew 16:19.

- Q10. Yet even a slave can influence his master. Describe how this can happen, Ephesians 6:5-8.
- Q11. A boss can influence his employees in the same way. Describe how this can happen and note two factors that bosses must be particularly alert to, Ephesians 6:9. Note also Colossians 4:1.
- Q12. As I am engaged in the **creative work of my first birth** and the **redemptive work of my second birth**, which are occurring simultaneously, how do I influence the lost nations of the world, 1 Peter 2:11-12.

How do I influence close family members, 1 Peter 3:1-2?

Q13. “**Serving**” should reflect every aspect of our lives. The Greek word, “**diakoneo**” (to serve) was use in the New Testament of Martha preparing food and serving Jesus. It included any ministry of physical or financial help, including “waiting on tables” (Acts 6:2) and by extension, any administrative role. Yet in the same passage the word “**diakoneo**” is used of “**the ministry of the word**” (Acts 1:6) and by extension, any gospel role.

Describe your ministry as it relates to your total (24/7) life?

Q14. What impresses you about Daniel, a highly placed Government servant, Daniel 6:3-4?

What other quality in Daniel’s life did everyone notice, Daniel 6:5, 10-11?

Daniel was not only an outstanding administrator in the Babylon Empire, but he also exercised another role. What was that role as seen throughout the book of Daniel?

- Q15. Archippus was a close friend of Philemon, the businessman who lived in Colossae. Philemon and Apphia (most likely Philemon's wife) and Archippus were the core of a group of believers centered around Philemon's home, Philemon 1-2. It is very possible that Archippus was also a businessman. What was Paul's advice to this believing businessman in Colossians 4:17? Think in terms of his total life.

What is your response if this advice was given to you today? Document your answer.

“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.