



## Sacred Work

By Marion Medina

God is always at work, and for humans, who are created in God's image, work is part of our original design. God instructed the first humans to work – to reign over the wildness of creation and to tend and watch over it (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15). Work existed before humans rebelled against God's perfect way. It was only after this disobedience that our connection to our purpose became distorted, and work began to feel like drudgery (Genesis 3:17-19). Instead of emulating God and finding purpose and joy in work, humans now often struggle to make a living.

But Jesus came to restore all things to God's original design. For those who follow Jesus, work can be full of purpose and meaning because work is what we were made to do. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "...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, NIV).

"Good works" doesn't just mean becoming a missionary, going into full-time ministry, sharing your faith, advocating for justice, or caring for the poor. I once heard someone say that their job was "just a job" but their volunteer work was their passion. That's sad—not because the person was doing good things as a volunteer, but because he didn't understand the sacred nature of work and was missing out on the joy and passion he could have been experiencing in his job.

The word "sacred" means "set apart," as in "set apart for God," so for a follower of Jesus, there is no separation between the sacred and the secular. Sacred is who we are; we are set apart for God by the saving work of Jesus on our behalf, so unless we are engaging in work that is harmful to others or to the world, our work is sacred. Sacred work is any work done "in the name of Jesus." An accountant who does her work recognizing that she is Jesus' representative on earth is doing good work, as is an artist who acknowledges God in all she creates.

But what if you are currently miserable in your job? Or what if you find yourself in a toxic work environment? You may need to consider leaving and finding a place where you can fully lean into your work and find joy. In the meantime, however, you can begin to take action to recover the sacred nature of your work, and the following steps might just lead you to a whole new outlook on your current job.

**Start by spending regular time with Jesus.** Take a few moments every day to read a story or a short passage from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and ask Jesus to speak to you and shape you through what you read. Over time, you'll begin to think like Jesus, and this can reframe your entire life.



**Talk with Jesus about His purpose for your life.** Reflect on the skills that energize you and make you feel most alive. Consider:

- Do you lose track of time when immersed in data analysis or building spreadsheets?
- Does selling a product or service you believe in ignite your passion?
- Do you find deep satisfaction in leading teams toward a common goal?

Whatever sparks your enthusiasm, approach it as if you're working directly for the Lord – because you are! Discuss these insights with Jesus, seeking his guidance. He may lead you to either stay in your current role but shift your perspective or pursue a new opportunity that aligns with your God-given talents.

**Seek to bless others.** When you spend regular time with Jesus and begin to do your work for Him, others are likely to notice. This may even create opportunities for you to explain the source of your joy. When God opens a door for you to talk about your faith, remember that God's command to Abraham was to "bless," not to convert (Genesis 12:1-3). Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, and while God may allow you to be part of that process for someone else, your primary directive is to bless others. So, ask Jesus to open your eyes to ways you can be a blessing to the people in your workplace. Remember that even an act of blessing as small as a mustard seed holds the power and potential of the Kingdom of God.

**Don't fake it.** Jesus followers are not perfect and shouldn't pretend they are! Be authentic in your workplace and be quick to admit when you've made a mistake or error. And learn to ask others for advice or help – this is a great way to bless a boss or colleague.

**Find other Jesus followers.** Remember that many other Jesus followers are striving to integrate faith and work, and some may be right there in your workplace. Christian Employee Resource Groups are an excellent place to find companions for this journey. If your company or organization doesn't have one, consider starting one. You can also turn to your faith community or your 4word Community Group for support. The key is to surround yourself with a few others who can encourage you, pray with you, and share in the inevitable ups and downs of even sacred work. By building this support network, you'll find strength and inspiration in your efforts to align your faith with your professional life.

Your work can be a source of joy and an act of worship when you recognize that you are a representative of Jesus in your workplace. You were created to do good works wherever you are and whatever you are doing. So let your faith inform and transform your work as you live out the mission of Jesus to restore all things – including work – to God's original design.



Paul sums it up this way: “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

#### Discussion Questions:

1. How do you react to the idea that before rebellion entered the picture, people were created to work?
2. Before you read this guide, what did you think Paul was referring to when he wrote that we were created to do “good works” which “God prepared in advance for us to do?”
3. What do you think about the idea that all work is sacred if it is done in the name of Jesus and does not harm others or creation?
4. What skills do have that energize you and make you feel most alive?
5. What are some specific ways God might be leading you to bless the people in your workplace? How can you follow through on what you’re sensing from God?



**Marion Medina** is the founder of Generate, a company that provides spiritual formation tools to individuals and strategy and planning tools to businesses and organizations. Her work, including her book, "Everyday Jesus," has helped hundreds of people discover a deeper experience of faith. Until recently, Marion served as the Director of Programs for 4word, a global organization supporting women in the workplace. In this role, she oversaw various programs including nationwide Community Groups, Executive Women's initiatives, and Emerging Leader programs. Prior to 4word, Marion spent 17 years in pastoral ministry, including roles at Willow Creek Community Church and Immanuel Church. During her church ministry, she combined her organizational development skills with her knowledge of discipleship to create growth strategies focused on equipping and mobilizing congregations for Jesus' mission.

Marion is a licensed minister who holds a Bachelor's degree in organizational leadership from Trinity International University and a Master's degree in Missional Church Movements from Wheaton College. Throughout her career, Marion has been involved in various leadership roles and initiatives. She contributed to organizations such as Alpha Chicago, where she served as Chairman of the Board, and the Church Evangelism Institute, a ministry of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. Marion also provided guidance and coaching for pastors and church leaders as part of the Christ Together Midwest Board.

Marion is known as a visionary spiritual leader, an inspiring communicator, and a developer of people, ideas, and organizations. Her passion lies in helping individuals and organizations develop healthy, mission-driven cultures through spiritual discernment.



**4word** is a global community of Christian women in the workplace. Our mission is to help women in the workplace reach their God-given potential with confidence.

### **Why 4word?**

At 4word, we know you want to reach your God-given potential so you can have a Kingdom impact on your workplace and the world. To do that, you need resources for professional and spiritual growth - and a community of like-minded women to cheer you on!

The problem is your time is limited and meaningful connections are hard to find. This can leave you feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and isolated on your life's journey.

**We believe you shouldn't have to navigate work, life and faith on your own because God designed you for community. You are worthy to be surrounded by loving and supportive women who "get you."**

**We understand you face unique challenges as a Christian woman in the workplace, which is** why we create easy-access opportunities for leadership development, spiritual growth, and connections to influential women around the globe.

### **Our Simple Empowerment Plan:**

- Connect to a community – We offer virtual and in-person Community Groups specifically designed for working women – and we also have special groups for executive women.
- Access relevant content – 4word's podcast, blog, and our Community Group Discussion Guides are specifically geared to women in the workplace to help thrive on your journey.
- Get matched with a mentor – From our pool of over 220 amazing mentors we connect you with the right fit for a transformational mentoring experience through 4word's Mentor Program

**Join the Journey** to empower 10 million Christian women in the workplace to change the world by 2030. Scan the QR code below to learn more.



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