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Work and Worship (with Matthew Kaemingk)

May 20, 2021



Alastair Roberts

Matthew Kaemingk joins me to discuss the relationship between work and Christian worship, the subject of the book he recently co-wrote with Cory Wilson, 'Work and Worship: Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy' (<https://amzn.to/2S3LUT0>).

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Transcript

Hello and welcome. I am joined today by Matthew Kaemingk, who's the author of a recent book or co-author, the recent book, Work and Worship, Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy. And Matthew Kaemingk is the Associate Dean of Fuller, Texas and Assistant Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Thank you so much for joining me. Hey, it's great to be here, Alastair. I'm looking forward to this conversation.

I've been looking forward to it all week. So this book is on a subject that is very near to my own heart on the subject of work and worship and what those two things have to do with each other and how our work can benefit from a well-ordered orienting liturgy. So I wanted to throw things over to you to just give an overview of what your book is about, what are the main themes within it, and what do you hope that people will gain from it? Absolutely.

So first off, I mean, the theme of the book is really focused on this haunting division in modern life that really we all experience, this division between, that we sense and we feel between our worshipping lives and our working lives, you know, between these activities that we do on Sunday morning and these things that we do on Monday morning. What on earth do these prayers and confessions and liturgies and rituals, all these things that we do on Sunday, how do they impact? How do they connect? How do they hit the road on Monday as we go to our offices and our factories and our schools and our hospitals? What does it mean to sort of bridge that gap? And for many Christians, particularly in the modern West, they sense that they're living their lives in two pieces and separated from one another. It would be my conviction that separated from one another, the integrity of worship and the integrity of work begins to break down.

And so that is the opening thrust of this book, is what would it look like for Christian communities to begin to reintegrate these aspects of their lives? And I use the word reintegrate because we really begin with a creation theology that God made us to work and worship in his presence. And that these aspects of our lives are actually intended to work together in concert and human life simply goes well when it flows back and forth between adoration and action. And so we don't spend a lot of time sort of criticizing in the book, this divided life, we really spend a lot of time thinking about how we might put these things back together.

And so we look at scripture and the ways in which work and worship are connected in ancient Israel and in the early church. And then we also look to church history and find that historically speaking, the early church really had a number of really interesting ways of connecting these aspects of their lives. And then moreover, the non-Western church, so that the church in Latin America and Africa and Asia today, has a number of interesting ways of connecting their work and worship that Western Christians could really learn from.

So our true hope in this book is to provide a set of resources and ideas, theological and practical, for how we might start to mend what we've torn asunder when it comes to work and worship. So that's the project and it ended up becoming a lot more ambitious than we realized, Corey and I, when we began the research project about four years ago and now it's finally out. So yeah, there you go.

So perhaps the big category that we think of in scripture for framing worship is that of the, or work, is the interplay of work and rest within the Sabbath pattern. I'd be interested to hear more about how you would relate and maybe distinguish between rest and worship and how that interrelationship helps you and your thinking through of the character of both of the terms, work and worship. Yeah, so biblically, you know, work and rest is grounded of course in the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2, but it's also grounded in what's going on after the Exodus.

And so one way of thinking about this command to rest is thinking about, you have these these Egyptian slaves who have escaped the Egyptian economy and this economy is one of exhaustion and it's one of constant work and striving and seeking after, you know, Egyptian power and glory and these massive building projects that are all about, you know, human power. And so the Israelite slaves have left this economy of exhaustion and total work and they need to learn God's economy of rest. How do they step into this new way of working in the world, this new economy of rest and grace, because they've learned all these bad patterns for work, right? These patterns for work that they were not designed for in creation, right? We were not designed to work seven straight days in exhaustion for human glory.

And so one way of thinking about Sabbath and those commands for Sabbath that were given to the ancient Israelites was God is looking to train them in a creational design for work and rest. And so Sabbath is not merely for the purpose of worship, but it's also, Sabbath is meant to reorient your perspective towards your work for the rest of your life. It's when you put your work down on Sabbath, that is an act of faith and trust that God is going to take care of you.

And that work is not really about you, it's about God's glory and it's a response to what God has done for you. And so a lot of these worship services that the ancient Israelites are given are meant not only to glorify God, but to train these Israelite workers into a better relationship with their work, with their land, with the people that they're working with, because it's God's intention that this new economy that the Israelites are going to be setting up in the promised land would be one that is a holy economy, an economy of work and rest, of holiness and justice, one that is different from the Egyptian economy. And so Sabbath is a part of that, that sort of training for the economy of Yahweh.

Seems to me that when we think about the relationship between work and rest within our culture, we often have a relationship between those two terms where either the work occurs merely in order to get to the weekend, the work is the means by which we fuel our leisure, or it can be the means rest is recharging, rest occurs for the sake of work so that we can do more work. Or it's a situation of the absolute negation of work. When you're resting, you're trying to get as far away from the reality of work as possible.

But it seems to me that the biblical approach that you're describing has a different sort of relationship between those terms. How would you describe it? Yeah, and I think I would add to that, when we think of a Christian's perspective on Sabbath, we often think of worship, Sunday morning worship as an escape from work, as a place where we try to forget about work and focus on spiritual things, where we try to, yeah, recharge in worship spiritually. And then the idea is you spend the whole week sort of spiritually draining yourself.

And then you get fueled up on Sunday, and then you get drained down throughout the

week. And that's just fundamentally not what we see in the Old Testament. So first of all, the ancient Israelites are not trying to forget about work during worship.

We find them constantly bringing their work into worship. They're bringing their grain and their fruit and their cows and their goats, and they're bringing these things forward. And then they say prayers.

So Deuteronomy 26, great example of a farmer bringing his fruit forward and giving this prayer about how God has blessed him, and been with him, you know, with all of his co-workers there. And they feast on their good work in the presence of the Lord. Another thing we see is the ancient Israelites learn that they can cry out to God about their work.

They can cry out in their sort of oppression in an evil workplace. So talking with, when you come to God, you never come empty-handed. You come to God carrying your stuff from the week.

And in worship, your work is transformed, and you go out to sort of continue that holy work in worship throughout the week. So yeah, this sort of escapism is no good. I mean, I can remember very vividly walking into a worship service where a worship director, he had his guitar and he was strumming it along, and he said, guys, I know you've all had a really busy week.

You've got a lot of things on your mind from work and school, but for the next hour, we're just going to focus on God. And that hit me so hard because I was thinking to myself, just switch that and say, I know you've all had a busy week, but for the next hour, we're going to carry that week to God. We're going to bring our confessions, our praises, our laments, all these things that have happened to us this week, we're going to bring those things to God and see how his gospel might and his spirit might transform those things.

And that is the Old Testament orientation, is you carry your work to God. I mean, it's a very strange thing that you have these people bringing their work and like lifting it up. It's a bit like a child bringing their sort of crayon drawing to God and saying, here, look what I made, you know.

Now, it seems to me that when we talk about the relationship between work and worship, work is one of our primary, I mean, it's one of the purposes for which we were created to be those who serve and guard God's creation and who glorify it in various ways and who grow within it. And if there's no relationship between what we're doing within the creation during the week and what happens on a Sunday morning, I wonder, are we actually performing what God has called us to do? And what are we being sent out to do at the end of the service? What do you think is lost when we do not have a sense of that very clear connection between those things? And can you give some examples of where you've really seen that in your own experience or things that you've

witnessed? Sure. So what's lost is people begin to think that God doesn't care about their work at all and that their work is merely a necessary evil of life in the world, or it's the only purpose of my work is to give money to the church and give money to, you know, missionaries and pastors who are the only ones who do the work of God and my work doesn't matter.

So like an example of that would be my childhood church had a mission map on it and there was a map of the whole world and we had all of our missionaries that we supported around the world with little flags and then there was a map of our city and it had the little non-profit organizations that we gave money to. And you know, it says God is on the move up above and so this sort of highlighted who was doing the work of God. Now my mother and father were a nurse who worked in a hospital and she she cared for mothers and babies at that very sort of intimate moment of when the baby was born and my dad was a carpenter and he ran a cabinet business and gave, you know, provided jobs to many people who needed it in the community.

Now my mom and dad were never called forward in church and prayed for. Their jobs were never on the mission map. They, you know, they offered money to support these missionaries and they would, you know, pray for the youth group before they would go on a youth mission trip.

But my parents were never commissioned and sent in worship. So and I grew up going to a reformed church and, you know, in the reformed tradition we have this belief, this theology of the priesthood of all believers that we are all working quorum deo before the face of God and that we're all part of this priesthood. But our Sunday morning liturgy communicated that my mom's work didn't really matter.

That so we had this theology of work that everybody's work matters but on Sunday morning the only things that happen is we talk about professional pastors and missionaries and Sunday morning is meant to recruit my mom and dad to spend more time volunteering inside the church rather than to send them out to be a nurse and to be a carpenter for the glory of God. So Sunday morning liturgy is all about recruiting to internal church activity rather than equipping and sending to kingdom work in the world. How do you think worship can give us a sense, you mentioned earlier for instance the Israelites in Egypt, that it was an evil workplace.

How do you think that worship can give us a sense of what good work is and how does it give us a means by which to recognize where work has gone wrong? Hmm that's a great question. I think that one of the things that good Christian worship can do is honestly embody a new form of community, a new way of interacting with others. So obviously through scripture and preaching we hear stories of the sort of community that we're to be in.

One way of thinking about worship is you get to experience in a small way the economy

of God and the ways in which the economy of God is different from the economy of the world. So a couple simple examples. One is you know in my church we we line up to take communion and you don't get to go first if you have a lot of money or if you have a lot of degrees or you have advanced standing in some way.

But simply the communion lineup you know old and young, rich and poor, we're all equal in that. There's an economy to that. There's also an economy to there is nothing you can do to earn communion, the Lord's Supper, to earn your place at the table.

There is no contractual exchange. It is freely given to you and obviously the narratives, the songs, the confessions are all orienting you into an economy of grace and generosity and overflowing, the overflowing gratuity of God in a way that is quite different from the economy of the world which is often based upon scarcity and grasping. And so worship itself can induct us and remind us of a different economy and can call us into that and then can send us out into the world of work with a knowledge of that other economy.

And then finally I would say for workers who are particularly oppressed or in unjust work experiences, worship can be a place where they are humanized and told that they matter deeply and that God sees them. We found in our research a worship song that was written in Southeast Asia for a church of Christians, many of whom work in sweatshops in Southeast Asia. And there was a song called Call Me By My Name.

And it was specifically for these workers who were given a number where they worked in these sweatshops. They were never called by their name. And it picks up on this eschatological theme that God knows our name and God gives us a name and sees us.

And the song would help these workers recognize you truly matter. No matter how much this economy dehumanizes you and turns you into a number, here on Sunday morning you're reminded that you do have true value. One of the things I noticed about the Gospels is the fact we know many of the apostles work and their communities and initial connections were formed in the workplace.

Andrew, Peter, James and John as fishermen. You think about Matthew called from the receipt of custom. Someone like Luke as a physician.

Peter or Paul is a tent maker and then he works alongside fellow workers like Aquila and Priscilla who are also tent makers. And Christ himself is the son of a carpenter. He's presumably is a carpenter himself.

Now it seems to me that many of the ties that actually led to the initial creation of the band of disciples and even the continuing relationships were formed in the context of the workplace. How have you seen Christians continuing the workplace as a place of Christian fellowship and not just as something that they're going into from outside and but as a place within itself of Christian bonds and meaning and purpose that is shared in

a community or in a small group of people? Yeah, so you're talking about Christian fellowship in a factory or an office or things like that? Yep, small business or yeah situation. So here's a little thing from the UK.

You know, years ago I did research on Leslie Newbegin and his return to the UK after his missionary work in India. And sort of famously when Newbegin was a missionary in India, he advocated that the English church give communion to the Indian people and like hand over control over the bread and the wine from the white people to the Indian people. He said, you know, the gospel needs to be owned by the people themselves and not controlled by this far-off force.

And so he ordained elders within these small Indian villages and he gave them the elements and said, you are now the church. And this was a very radical thing for Newbegin to do. When he returns to the UK, he finds a modern UK economy that has created a division once again.

Essentially, the church is becoming suburbanized and people are traveling into the city to do their work, but they are worshipping out in the suburbs. And the worship in the suburbs is disconnected from their working lives in the factories and so forth. And so he advocates that we give the elements of communion back to the workers and to the factories and to the universities and the offices.

In a number of really interesting little speeches that no one really pays attention to in their Newbegin research, but it's really fascinating. So he advocates for the planting of churches in factories and offices. Appoint an elder, give them the ministry of the word, because he says the gospel has to be where the people are, where they're working, not just where they're sleeping.

Because what happens is the gospel becomes focused simply on people's family suburban life and it becomes disconnected from their working life. And so the church really is reduced to only speaking about family issues and the issues of the suburbs. So that was kind of an interesting point to me that I've always really wrestled with, what does it look like for the church to be present in the marketplace? And anyways, I'm just glad you asked that.

It's funny that it's another UK man asking me. It does seem that there is something of that modern breach between work and life and worship. We're struggling with that in many different ways.

So you mentioned the way in which, when you think about the workplace, the workplace traditionally would be associated far more with the community in which you lived. Now it's something that you go out to and you'll spend a significant portion of your week within that context. And then you have this compartmentalized part of your life, which is where you relax, you enjoy leisure time, you have personal connection.

And that breach, I think, is one that, I mean, many of the things that you're dealing with within your book, it's dealing with that breach behind all of it. I think about the past where much of the work took place within the context of families and immediate communities, extended families, things like that. So your workplace was the same as your home or your household.

And as a result, the sorts of connections that you're drawing were the organic connections that you'd have with your nearest kin or with your closest neighbors. And what we have now is a very different sort of situation that makes it very hard for us to put back together what has been torn apart. Yeah, that's absolutely right.

Yeah, it's an issue of geography. Of course, there are other issues of culture and history, but one of them is just simply geography. That it used to be, living in a small European village, you would have the marketplace right next to the church, right next to the field.

And a worker could see the steeple from anywhere and would be reminded of... And the priest would move in and through the marketplace and the fields. And of course, in the Middle Ages, they had these rogation liturgies where the priest and the farmer would walk around the field and pray for the field and pray for protection over the crops. And they would have... In England, it was called the loaf mass, the Lammastide, where the very first grain that was harvested in the village would be turned into a loaf for the celebration of communion.

And it was a special moment when all the farmers would gather to give thanks for the harvest and the harvest of Christ. And there was this deep sense of connection between those things. It's much more difficult to bring a real estate portfolio or an accounting Excel spreadsheet into worship.

And so those are real liturgical challenges that we are trying in this book to call pastors and worship leaders to is try to imagine what does it look like for you to encourage the people of God to start bringing their work to God on a Sunday morning, very practically. And that just calls for creativity. It seems to me that when we talk about work, we don't maybe pay enough attention to the manifold ends of work.

People think about work more or less in terms of earning a wage and supporting yourself. But we go to work, we're looking for community and belonging. We're looking for things like a face within a community for people to have some sense of us giving something to the community.

We want to have a sense of purpose and we want companionship. We want to be formed in our character. We want to develop and express our skills and abilities.

We want a sense of belonging to a tradition to serve people around us. We want a sense of ownership of what we're doing. We want integration of our work with the various areas

of our life.

We want to create things. We want to provide, we want a sense of agency and strength and power and responsibility. And we want to establish a degree of independence and freedom.

And all of these things, in addition to the importance of earning a wage, are maybe things that get lost in our picture of work often. When we think about good work, we're thinking mostly about how much do you earn? And I wonder whether as Christians, we have particular means of speaking to this truncated vision of work that our society doesn't. What are some of the resources that you think as Christians that we have that maybe can speak to a society that has forgotten about the manifold goodness of work? Absolutely.

So my thought immediately goes to Old Testament harvest celebrations. That the discipline of celebration and partying in ancient Israel was very important. God commanded the people at harvest time to celebrate and to celebrate lavishly the goodness of God that they experienced in their work and in their harvest.

And these were not individualistic parties of gluttony. These were communal parties in which all of the workers and the orphans and the widows and the poor were gathered together to celebrate the goodness and faithfulness of God through agriculture. So when you have this harvest, you would gather all these people and you would declare that God has been glorified, God has been faithful, and you would rehearse the story that you were once a slave in Egypt.

And you would rehearse the story that this land was given to you by the grace of God, not by your own work. And so year after year after year, you would be trained to understand that the purpose of work is not your own power and privilege, the purpose of work is the glory of God and the feeding of the whole community and the flourishing of the whole community. And that it's not an economy of grasping and exhaustion and power, it's an economy of generosity and justice and rest and beauty.

And that is how God wanted to be celebrated. And that was also, it had a memorializing function of reminding you what work is for, what you work for, and why God gave you this land. God did not give you this land for your own richness.

And there was this real concern as the Israelites are going into the promised land that they would forget these basic things. And so these liturgies were meant to do that. So bringing us forward to today, what does a Christian worker do when she receives a promotion, when she receives a bonus, when she graduates from university, when she gets a new job, when something big happens in her career, when she has some kind of harvest, you know, does she take that bonus and sort of store it away? And does she take that new job and that new salary and just kind of stuff it away? Or does she very

intentionally pause for a moment of celebration, of memorial, of remembering what God has done and pulling together, you know, friends and mentors, people who have worked with her over her career.

And does she name the goodness of God and remind herself, perhaps she gives a special gift to the poor in her community, just remembering that without God, she would be X or Y. So I would say that that's the first resource we have. And I would say that the second thing I wanted to mention is this is not simply an ancient Israelite thing. We're learning a lot more about early church worship now and its connections with ancient Israel.

And one of the key binding points here is that the early church continued to celebrate first fruits rituals. They didn't put these down. And we have a number of different records of early churches throughout the Roman Empire bringing, carrying fish and fruits and olives and cheese and clothing and carrying these things to worship.

And there's been liturgies that the pastor would speak over these workers asking for a blessing over their work. And so this is not sort of left in the Old Testament, but the early church carries these things on in really interesting ways. So I think we as Christians today need to think about how do we celebrate these vocational harvests.

Perhaps one of the things that sticks out to me about much of the New Testament teaching on work is the way it focuses upon the figure of the slave, that the teaching about the relationship between the slave and his master is where we find some of the richest teaching relating to work more generally. And that seems instructive to me that even within the very worst sort of work, there is Christian meaning and purpose to be found. But yet at the same time, Christian understanding of work is not an affirmation of the badness of that work, but saying even when you strip everything else away, you can still live in a way that is dignified towards Christ.

And there's something there that other people who don't have Christ as their master, they can never enjoy. But the person who is a Christian can find even in that rock bottom form of labor, they can find something that is dignifying and elevating. And it seems to me that Christian approaches then can be transformative of the mindset of the worker.

This is one of the things that I think I really appreciate about approaches such the one that you're presenting. It's forming the imagination and giving people the resources to re-narrate their experience. So having had some of these liturgies established in the church, what would be some of the ways of narrating or understanding their experience that you hope workers would take away? Let's say you're working as an actuary or something like that, and you have these liturgies on a Sunday.

What do you want to be thinking about on a Monday when you go to your workplace? So yeah, what should an actuary be thinking about on Monday? I think that what we found in our research is, of course, what you're thinking about on Monday matters, but also the

sort of spiritual practices that you develop for yourself on Monday, those are really important. Because it's one thing to have a theological understanding that your work matters to God. It's another thing to have spiritual practices in your office that remind you that what you're doing day to day truly matters.

An embodied spiritual practice in the workplace. So I'll give you a couple of examples of this. One is an office worker that I know, when he comes into his office, he comes in a little bit early and he does his Bible devotions intentionally in his office rather than at home as a way of reminding himself that this is the place where he's going to follow Jesus today.

And when he does it, he takes off his shoes under the desk and he tells me that he does this to remind himself this is holy ground. Another woman who works in a cubicle, she had put a little piece of tape at the entrance to her cubicle. And that would sort of mark her parish, if you will, to use our language.

That this is the space that God has given her. And that when someone comes to speak with her and she sees them step over that piece of tape into her parish, if you will, she has to understand that she's called to minister to that person and to serve them well. And she is in a sense their priest.

She is interceding before God for them. So little practices like that. I had another woman who was a physical therapist and she had developed this frustration with her patients who weren't doing their exercises, you know, when they're trying to get better.

And she started to develop some anxiety and frustration. And so she had simply developed this practice of resting her hand on the patient's body for a little while just to physically remind her that this body was made in the image of God and that she's called to care for this body. None of these things are showy to the rest of the people in the office.

No one else knows that these things are happening. But there are ways of triggering for workers an awareness of God's presence. Now these aren't magical things in that you're not calling God's presence.

God's already there. God's already working. But they awaken you to the fact that this is a holy place where holy service takes place and that this is the place where you are called to minister.

So they all involve space, body, time, and practice. And those are ways of awakening us to God's mission in the workplace. Because once again, you can give a worker a theological understanding that their work matters, but they need some kind of practice to remind themselves.

We all do. We just need these things because we're forgetful people, just like ancient

Israel. We're just forgetful people.

So I really do encourage workers, like, you know, your actuary, to think about how they need to be reminded in whatever way it is and then to develop some kind of little memory practice. So the workplace is perhaps one of the chief interfaces between Christians and the wider world and their neighbors. How do you see the workplace as a place in which people can bear witness to Christ? How do you see these forms of liturgy as well, informing people and equipping people and being means by which people present Christ to others working with them or to whom they're serving? Yes, I mean, I absolutely agree.

The workplace is really the place where these sorts of things happen. You know, here in the United States, it's very popular in the Christian community to talk about neighborhood ministry and reaching out to your neighbors, the people who, frankly, sleep near you. And a lot of energy is spent on neighborhood ministry here in the United States.

And while I'm encouraging of any kind of ministry, I find it confusing that we spend so much energy focused on the people who sleep near us. In my neighborhood, you know, they often drive their cars directly into the garage and close the doors and there's not a lot of interaction. But you spend, you know, 50, 60 hours a week right next to these people that you work with.

They spend more time with you than your own children and spouse and they know you very well. And that is really the, those are really the primary people that you are called to minister to. And so, yeah, the workplace is absolutely the frontier of missional calling for Christians.

And not only that, I would say that the workplace is not only the place where we engage in mission, but it's also the place where we learn and grow in Christ. That's really the primary place where we're working out this faith that we've been called to and where God is working on us in terms of our patience and our trust and our love and our faith. That true spiritual growth is not just happening on Sunday, but all through the week we are learning very feebly to follow Jesus.

And so we need to start thinking about the rest of the week as a place of spiritual growth and service. And yeah, these worship practices can help us start to think that way. Rather than, and so this is just a transformation for the church.

From going to, thinking about Christian service and growth as happening on the margins of your life, that you grow in faith when you can carve out time in the mornings or carve out time on the weekends to go to worship or carve out time for a special mission trip. So Christianity on the margins, so however much I can carve out for God at the edges, that's what he has. Rather than seeing the central flow of my life being a part of the

mission of God.

So we've spoken mostly, I think, about the situation of employees. I'd be curious to hear some thoughts that you might have about the way that your discussion of work can speak to someone who's a Christian employer, someone who's starting a business, someone who's employing a group of people and forming the community of the workplace and in a very particular way. And someone who's trying to think about running a business in a way that is prudent and responsible, but also glorifying to God in treatment to employees in the way that funds are used in the way that it integrates with the community, etc.

Yeah, that's wonderful. So we've talked about the ways in which worship can raise up the oppressed, raise up the little guy, right? Remind the little guy that he matters and that his work matters. There is also a humbling factor of worship as well, that for the powerful, the CEO, whatever, worship has a way of reminding the powerful of their place beneath God.

And so, you know, if you spend your whole week giving directions and being in charge and people coming to you looking for answers and you move people here and there from one office to another, you can start to develop a deity complex, right? And so worship has a way of humbling us, of putting us in our place, right? The CEO doesn't get to pick the songs and the liturgies and the creeds. Those are picked for him or her. So worship has a humbling aspect to it.

The other thing I would say is we have a chapter in the book on work and worship in the Psalms. And in the Psalms, you see a lot of work imagery of farming and obviously shepherding and cultivation, God being sort of like an engineer setting the foundations of the earth. And so there's a lot of talk about the work of God and the work of people in the Psalms.

And the ways in which these things are arranged is really important. And here's how it works in the Psalms. You always learn about the work of God first and then your work second.

So the work of God is just, the work of God is generous, the work of God is beautiful, the work of God is spacious. You know, the Psalms speak about all the amazing and mighty works of God. And then the psalmist, the human workers come afterwards and learn to walk in the ways of the Lord and to work in the ways of the Lord.

And so the patterns of our human work are meant to follow after the patterns of God's work in that God uses power to liberate and create life. And so you ask about the CEO, the person in power. It seems to me that in good worship, you meet a God who uses power for the flourishing of others, who uses power for the sake of justice and shalom and flourishing and delight.

And so the CEO encounters a God who encounters a God who works in the ways of love and is invited, commanded to extend that work through the way that they run their company. Now, worship will not tell you how exactly to structure salary and vacations and corporate strategy, but it will cement for you that if you have been given economic power, that economic power is not for yourself, but it's for the flourishing of others. And so it will invite the CEO to wrestle with how might your economic power be leveraged for the flourishing of others, not for yourself.

So I'd be interested to hear some of your specific, you go through a number of liturgical suggestions. If you're speaking to a pastor who is trying to connect with the workplace, with the lives of workers within the church, and who's trying to design the liturgy of the church in a way that does that, what counsel would you give to him? Yeah, so two key pieces of basic advice is that good worship gathers workers and it scatters workers. It brings work in and it sends work out.

It has a gathering, scattering function. So first off, how to gather workers is really important. So as you welcome people in on a Sunday morning, you want to find ways for them, creative ways.

This is for leaders of worship that is very traditional or very contemporary. There are many different styles to worship, obviously, but every single style has the ability to do this. You want to find creative ways to encourage people to bring their work to God.

And that means the hard things and the good things. So sometimes they need to bring confessions from the workplace, things that they need to confess to God, or they need to bring laments from the workplace, just heartbroken. You have to name for them that many of them have had a hard week and that worship is a place where they can be honest with God about their exhaustion, their unanswered questions.

But then you also need to create space for them to praise God for his goodness in their daily lives. So what worship does is really just help give some language to workers so that they don't sort of keep it in or check the work at the door, because they're carrying a lot of stuff. The other function is the sending, the scattering of workers.

Worship should have a sending power to it, sending them out into the world to extend their worship into the rest of their lives. So you should see that the people should understand that they don't simply have a moment of worship on Sunday morning, but their whole lives are worship. So Sunday morning is the starting, is the start of a whole week of worship.

And it's just going to take worship in a different form. You move from adoration to action. So you want to send people out.

And the way you send people out is really, I think that the easiest way to think about this

is to use what we do with missionaries. In the evangelical tradition. So sometimes people have a mission Sunday.

Do you ever do something like this Alistair? Yep. Yeah. So you bring the missionaries in and they give a testimony of what they're doing on the mission field and you pray for them.

You lay hands on them. You take up an offering. You talk about the, they tell the stories of the different things that God has done on the mission field and then you send them out.

Well, you can take that model and do the same thing with workers. So, you know, after this pandemic is over, get all the medical professionals together, right. And have them share stories of what God did, you know, in the hospital, give their testimony and, and, and give testimony of hard things and beautiful things, and then gather them together, lay hands on them, pray for them, bless them and send them.

That's, that's just a very sort of simple thing that you can do. And I promise you that they will never forget that service for the rest of their lives. You could give a six week sermon series on faith and work and, and they might forget much of what you said, but they will never forget that moment that they were called up and had hands laid on them.

So yeah, every good, every good worship service needs to end with a blessing and a charge. And, and that charge can really name their vocations and their mission, instead of just focusing their attention on the ministries of the institutional church and all the activities of the internal church, focus their attention on their mission and their vocation in the city and send them towards that. This has been a fantastic conversation.

Thank you very much for joining me. And I'd like, just in conclusion, a lot of your book is, and you've mentioned this already, it's thinking creatively and imaginatively about how to approach something that doesn't just have a system or technique as it's, as a proper response to it. There are many different situations that people are going to have to act into, and this is required for pastors, for Christian business owners, and for Christian workers, and for people in all sorts of different situations, whether in their home, whether in the life of worship, whether we're in the workplace, thinking about how to integrate and to connect these things and to explore what it means to act in a meaningful way.

I'd be interested to hear how you, how would you respond to someone who's a Christian worker who wants to explore creative and imaginative ways of connecting their life of worship with their workplace, but yet feels they don't have the creative or imaginative resources. What are some of the questions or the diagnostic tools that you would give them to maybe start to notice things, the opportunities, the possibilities, the creative outlets that they could develop? Yeah, so I spoke a little earlier about spiritual disciplines

in the workplace, and that is a really great place to start. You know, I think on a Sunday morning, there's a couple of things that workers can do.

The first is in preparation for worship. I grew up in this church that had like essentially three minutes of silence when people were coming in just to prepare for worship. And that, those, whether you're driving to worship or you're doing online worship, taking a few moments to prepare for worship and to ask yourself to examine your week.

You know, in the New Testament, we're told to examine ourselves before we take, you know, the Lord's Supper. To examine your week, go through your week and think about the problems, the people, the victories, the confessions. Think about all the things that you need to bring to God this week and go through that.

And then carry that before the sermon, before the, you know, the songs and hold those things in your mind. The second thing I would think about is distraction during worship. So I'm sure this has never happened to you, Alistair, but perhaps you've come across a particularly dull sermon and your mind wanders during the sermon to things of work.

And you start thinking about the things that you have to do for the next week during a sermon or the meetings you have to have or the conflicts you have to deal with. And you're distracted during worship. Now for me and for many other people that I talk to, when you catch yourself distracted during worship, we tend to berate ourselves.

Like, we need to be focused on God and this is a spiritual time and so we need to stay focused. And what I would encourage workers to do is just take a little bit of a turn and to say, imagine that that distraction is the Holy Spirit prompting you to bring that to God. That thing, that worry, that workplace worry, that workplace concern, that thing that's consuming you.

Imagine that you're in the sanctuary for a reason, that God has called you and that perhaps the Holy Spirit is prompting you to turn that distraction essentially into a prayer offering in that moment, rather than just berating yourself and trying to be super spiritual. Actually giving that to God, that could be a helpful practice as well. And then finally, the last thing I would say to workers is to go to your pastor and encourage your pastor to reflect on how Sunday morning might be a place where workers bring their week to God and how Sunday morning might bless and send them.

Because in my experience, pastors do care about workers, but they have not been trained by seminaries to think creatively about these things. And so, you know, invite them. Don't berate or scold your pastor for not doing this because frankly, seminaries have failed them.

And I say this as a seminary professor, but you know, invite them to wrestle with that. But anyways, yeah, thank you so much for having me Alistair. This has been a lot of fun

and I hope we can do something like this again.

Yeah, it's been great. Thank you. The book again is *Work and Worship, Reconnecting Our Labor and Liturgy*.

And the authors Matthew Kamink, who's been with me, and Corey Wilson. I'll give the link to that in the show notes. Thank you very much for listening.

God bless.