

Even though Sider's public policy positions have certainly moderated, it is evident that he still trusts government control over free markets in many instances. For example, Sider remains convinced that minimum wage laws are "necessary" even though empirical studies have demonstrated that they reduce employment levels, especially for low-skill, minority, and younger workers, many of whom are among the poor Sider wants to help.

Sider also insists that the science behind global warming "is now clear," despite revelations of data fraud and collusion among prominent scientists involved in the 2009 Climategate scandal. It is difficult not to question Sider's intellectual honesty when he will not even acknowledge that a legitimate controversy exists. It is easy, however, to see that allowing room for debate would seriously undermine his preferred policies. His creation-care recommendations include imposing a "heavy" carbon tax that would "double or triple" the price of gasoline, coal, and natural gas, and give more power to the United Nations (presumably including its Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose members were key players in Climategate). Few evangelicals disagree with the proposition that humans are charged with wise stewardship of God's good creation, but many will suspect that Sider's recommendations have more to do with his commitment to modern liberalism than his commitment to biblical principles.

Those examples illustrate only a few of the many reasons why conservative evangelicals are likely to find Sider's methodological analysis of political issues disappointing, if not outright suspect. His express commitment to biblical authority may be utterly sincere, but ultimately Sider's guide to evangelical political philosophy feels more like proof texting than like a trustworthy roadmap for Christian political engagement.

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Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture

R. Paul Stevens

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2012 (176 pages)

The Theology of Work (TOW) and Business as Mission (BAM) movements are growing exponentially as Christians of all traditions reimagine the "apostolate of the laity" (Pope John Paul II) and the priesthood of all believers (Protestant streams). R. Paul Stevens is a seasoned leader in marketplace-workplace-ministry thinking, publishing several previous works and teaching at all levels on leadership and marketplace ministry. His new work is a creative and important contribution to a growing body of literature evaluating the biblical foundations for diverse Christian vocations.

Work Matters is a "quick romp" (in the words of Jeff Van Duzer's blurb) through the Bible, but it is not elementary or superficial. Work is understood to be much more than commerce or labor. Drawing on the Hebrew terms for work in Genesis 1, Stevens summarizes the prefall divine mandate of work as obedience to God and service before God and for the world. Work is extrinsically and intrinsically good. It is the entrance of

sin that creates bad work. Stevens surveys every genre and section of the Old and New Testaments, selecting individuals and narratives that illustrate diverse forms of work: the good, the bad, and the challenging.

Stevens' biblical hermeneutics and theological assertions are broadly evangelical and are useful for all Christians. A couple of his opinions deserve mention. The author assumes the three-character reading of the Song of Solomon, accurately seeing the work as a celebration of marital play. Such a view does not require this particular mode of interpretation. From the beginning, Stevens eschews the sacred-secular dichotomy. On pages 11–12 he asserts, “we should make no distinction between sacred and secular work. In God’s design there is no dualism—sacred and secular.” Yet in his exposition of kingdom work drawn from New Testament examples, there is little mention of the positive facets of enterprise and wealth creation and much emphasis on the ethical challenges (see page 138) confronting Christians who participate in the global economy.

The structure of the book is particularly helpful, with brief introductions to each section of Scripture (Law, Historical Books, Wisdom Writings, Prophets, Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation) and concluding summaries with principles for application. In each subsection, Stevens challenges the readers with insights for their life at work.

With these qualifiers, the work is an artistic masterpiece, skillfully extracting insights from the texts that are useful for further research and immediate discipleship application. One of the important threads woven throughout this work is the reality that all the biblical heroes spent most of their waking lives working at regular tasks for long periods of time in between the moments of redemption and revelation. Stevens avoids facile generalizations about the characters and their labors. For example, the author does not comment on the macroeconomic or political implications of Joseph’s work for Egypt (and by extension, for the preservation of Israel) or Jacob’s youthful deceptions. Instead, the positive facets of work are explored and the reader sees God at work in the labor itself.

Stevens allows the Bible to qualify the work—hence the titles of the chapters and sections. The good work of Adam and Eve before the fall becomes the degraded work of Cain. Jacob’s virtue work and Joseph’s vocational work help readers frame choices and reflect on the larger implications of their daily efforts.

The pages about the Spirit work of Bezalel and Oholiab may be the most important in the book. Exodus 25 and 35 mark the first time someone is “filled with the Spirit”—anointed for a God-given task. In this case, the first activity for Israel after their deliverance and receiving of the Law was a community art project designed to welcome the presence of God! All good work matters to God. There are moments, however, when the Lord appoints women and men to specific roles. A sense of vocation and the need of God’s empowering are vital principles for fruitful Christian service.

The titles of chapters contain the essence of the message the author is conveying, and the principles and applications emerge from these reflections. In broad categories, the Torah is God-given work. The Historical Books are stewardship work—with evaluations based on covenantal loyalty and obedience. Within this framework, there is the survival work of Ruth, the royal work of David, the shrewd work of Nehemiah and the providential

work of Esther. These are not just pithy titles but substantive reflections on the work of God in the work of people. Soul work is the rubric for the Wisdom books. Job is wild work, the Proverbs divide well into slothful and entrepreneurial (creative and productive) work, and Ecclesiastes is fashioned as enigmatic work. As a whole the Prophets are concerned with just work, with the foci on equity and justice in the courtroom and field. Subcategories here include Ezekiel's imaginative work, Daniel's exilic work and Jonah's (reluctant) missionary work.

The New Testament is about kingdom work, as believers live in the already-but-not-yet of the reign of God empowered by the Spirit. Pages 136–37 capture the heart of the gospel and all work when we understand that Jesus came to renew and transform all of life. Every occupation and vocation is infused with purpose, even while we still experience conflict with fallen principalities and powers. Stevens writes:

Since the scope of redemption in Christ is the same as the scope of creation, therefore work is done for God's realm when it creates new wealth, alleviates poverty, brings well-being to people, reconciles people to God, embellishes and improves human life, sometimes in conflict to powers resistant to God's coming *shalom* (137).

The New Testament exemplars are Mary and Martha for contemplative work, Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla for tent-making (bi-vocational) work, Paul for lasting work in service of the gospel and John for the heavenly work of receiving and communicating divine revelation. The essence of the good news is that God is bringing the future into the present as Christians carry out their vocations in the service of the Great Commission and shaped by the Great Commandment.

All of the types of work have application for all believers, depending on circumstance and opportunity. From Job's wrestling with injustice to learning the contemplative life while serving a crowd, the Bible informs all our work. Justice for our employees is united with diligence and righteousness in attitude and action. There is much in every line for laity and clergy, academics and activists to ponder.

This is a summative work by an insightful and integrative leader. It is not trendy but full of wisdom. It will be useful for colleges and seminaries concerned with integrating faith and work (Scripture and ethics) and with bridging the sacred-secular gap. It is particularly useful for leadership studies and small groups wanting more than elementary insights. It also deserves a place on the desk of every ministry, organization, and think tank serious about biblical insights and work.

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