



## Lesson Guide

### Lesson 11 - Labor: Created to Create

#### Introduction

We now turn our attention to the northwest and embark on a tour of our fifth social sphere: *Labor*. By the time this tour is finished, we will have made a number of striking discoveries about this system. We will have found that creative labor is a vital element of God's plan for the social realm; that work is *not* a "curse," as it is often represented today, but an essential element of our humanity; that it is, in fact, rooted in the nature of God Himself, the Original Worker. We will also learn that the structure of this sphere parallels that of the others we have already visited in that it also appears triune in design. And we will begin to see that the importance of work is closely related to our divinely given responsibility to care for the poor.

#### Themes

"What is work?" Present that question to a cross-section of the population and you'll probably receive a wide variety of answers. Unfortunately, within the context of contemporary culture it's increasingly likely that a preponderance of these responses will be negative in tone. Many people use phrases such as "a bummer," "what I have to do for money," or "the only way to get to Friday" to describe their feelings about work. Even Christians sometimes reference the fall as support of their view that labor is nothing but a *curse*.

In this Lesson, Dr. Tackett makes the case that these disparaging attitudes toward work are completely at odds with the scriptural worldview. He even goes so far as to argue that they can be interpreted as yet another manifestation of the *Cosmic Battle* – in other words, that they are destructive *lies*. Far from being a curse, creative labor is a glorious privilege. It flows out of the heart of God Himself, who labored six days to bring the world into existence, stamped His inventive and energetic image upon mankind, and placed Adam in the garden to tend it, beautify it, and increase its productivity. The creativity of man, then, while subject to the effects of the fall, is nevertheless a mirror-image of the creativity of God. It is designed to be a source of joy so fulfilling and wonderful that the Lord deemed it necessary to give us the fourth commandment in order to insure that we would set our work aside and rest at least one day a week!

This sphere, like that of the family, the church, and the state, is founded upon *relationships*. These relationships, which are ordered according to scriptural principles (see, e.g., Ephesians 6:5-9), fit the general triune pattern we have observed in other areas. God has granted the stewardship of His *material goods* to *owners*; and these *owners* are in turn accountable to Him for the use of His "stuff" and responsible for the welfare and productivity of the *workers* who operate under their direction and authority. Within this sphere, which Dr. Tackett calls the "engine room of culture," wealth is generated that has the potential to meet the physical needs of

mankind; and the responsibility for the compassionate use of this wealth, he argues, falls primarily upon the shoulders of those who are engaged in the field of Labor.

As a special sub-heading of this topic, we will also consider the implications of this discussion for media and the creative arts. Here, too, says Dr. Tackett, there is a fundamental “truth issue” at stake; for under the sovereignty of God and His eternal ethical standard, *beauty* in the arts should be consistent with *goodness* and *truth*. This is a subject of special concern in a time like ours when, as Dr. Francis Schaeffer averred, “Whoever controls the media controls culture.” Within this context, it is imperative that Christians begin to make their influence felt in the field of creative art.

### **Points to Watch For**

Participants on this tour may find themselves challenged – in some cases uncomfortably so – in the area of their personal views of work. It may be important to handle the discussion in such a way that they will be gently *encouraged* to explore the joy of engaging in creative labor rather than made to feel guilty about having a “TGIF” attitude toward the working week. It’s also worth noting that Dr. Tackett’s ideas about compassion and relief for the poor – namely, that labor needs to create job opportunities for the needy rather than leaving this area of concern solely to the state – may become the occasion of some lively political and social debate.

### **Discussion Questions** (Pick 3 or 4 for your discussion time.)

(Make these questions your own. That is, don’t just “read” them, but become familiar with them so that they don’t appear as simply an item to get through. Go through them yourself before your group meets and ponder them.)

#### **1) Opening Question: (this may be the only question you need to ask).**

A. Ask your guests to list what they saw on the tour. Here are some of the key items: The “labor” command; the command to work and rest; the world’s view of work; is work a curse?; the “God of Wonders” video clip; Gutenberg’s work; God is the original worker; creative work is a divine attribute; the positive and negative importance of this sphere; the general economic model; the sphere of labor & its design; “I wish I could hire a Christian!”; the seven principles of economics: 1. all things belong to God, 2. God appointed man to be a creative steward with ownership rights, 3. theft and coveting of another’s property is wrong, 4. skills and abilities to work come from God, 5. work is profitable, good and to be pursued; laziness is not, 6. love God and not your goods, 7. be compassionate and generous with your good to those in need; the responsibility of this sphere to the poor; the implications for the arts & media; the question of whether or not “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”; biblical standards for the creative arts; the overwhelming presence of media in our culture; “I will set before my eyes no vile thing”; Bach and Soli Deo Gloria.

B. Ask your guests to point out the ones that were particularly interesting or striking to them and why.

C. Ask if this particular area struck anyone else as well.

D. Ask if there were other items that they saw that stood out to them. (You may want to read back through the list if you need to.)

- 2) **Dr. Tackett begins this tour by reminding us of the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment – “Thou Shalt Not Steal” – and what it implies about property and ownership rights. How is this relevant to the ensuing discussion of labor and economics?**

(From a biblical perspective, the whole sphere of work and economics is *founded* upon the concept of “rightful possession.” Material goods and wealth are not evil or negative things, nor are they matters of indifference with which we can play fast and loose. God entrusts *His* “stuff” to us in order that we, like the servants in Jesus’ parable of talents, might do something creative, inventive, and useful with it. In the process, we enhance our own dignity and the dignity of others as people made in the image of the creative God. We also produce goods and labor opportunities with which to alleviate the physical sufferings of the poor and needy. Collectivist economic systems destroy the incentive to work precisely by destroying the concept of private property.)

- 3) **Why does Dr. Tackett temporarily re-name the fourth commandment “The Labor Command?” How does this tie in with Jesus’ declaration that “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”?**

(The point here is that we tend to focus our attention exclusively on the “Sabbath rest” aspect of the command and forget that it also says, “Six days you shall labor and do all your work ...” [Exodus 20:9]. This is not a pronouncement of some kind of “doom,” but rather a statement about the basic design of human nature. Man was not only made to work, but to find great joy and fulfillment in the exercise of this facet of the *Imago Dei*. This is what Jesus had in mind when He said, “The Sabbath was made for man ...” He was assuming that without this part of the commandment, we might be tempted to go on working without a break.)

- 4) **Read Genesis 3:17-19. What is the focal point of the *curse* that God pronounces on Adam in these verses? How might a correct understanding of this curse impact our thinking about the sphere of labor and the place of work in our lives?**

(Dr. Tackett points out that the curse is directed not at labor itself but at “the ground” and the practical *results* of our work. In a fallen world, we are not able to accomplish our aims and goals with the same degree of *ease* and *satisfaction* that we would have experienced before the advent of sin; we are, in a sense, always rowing upstream. Properly speaking, this aspect of our existence is an occasion for sorrow and regret – a reminder of what was lost when Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge. As such, it is also to be understood as part of the “groaning” and “labor pangs” of creation which are to be reversed at the advent of Christ’s kingdom. In other words, work is just one of the many facets of human life that are being *redeemed* by the blood shed on the cross.)

- 5) **What are some ways that the Old Testament principle of “gleanings” might be applied within the context of our modern economy? What is the key difference between this approach to helping the needy and that of the “welfare state”?**

(Discussion can be spurred by reminding participants of the example Dr. Tackett provides – i.e., the woodworker who allowed the poor to come into his shop after hours, sweep up the sawdust, and sell it to a pulp processing plant. This approach involves coming up with creative ways to let the poor *work* for their living rather than robbing them of their dignity with state-subsidized handouts.)

- 6) **Makoto Fujimata, founder of the International Arts Movement, argues that the Church needs to find ways to re-establish itself as a *center* of creative and artistic activities. Why is his vision so important to the future not only of the Church, but of western culture as a whole?**

(Increasingly, the creative arts have become the *major* vehicle for propagating contemporary *philosophical* ideas – ideas that exclude God and exalt the concept of the *cosmic cube*. In other words, the real dialogue about truth is taking place not in academic classrooms, but in the realm of movies, music, advertising, and mass media. This is why Dr. Francis Schaeffer said, “Whoever controls the media controls culture.” This is one of the major fronts on which the *Cosmic Battle* will be won or lost in our time. Christians, who have the compelling and winsome message of God’s truth, need to find effective ways of re-engaging the culture by dedicating themselves to excellence and committing their creative and artistic endeavors to the Lord.)