

A Life of Meaning

Disciplining Christians for Vocations

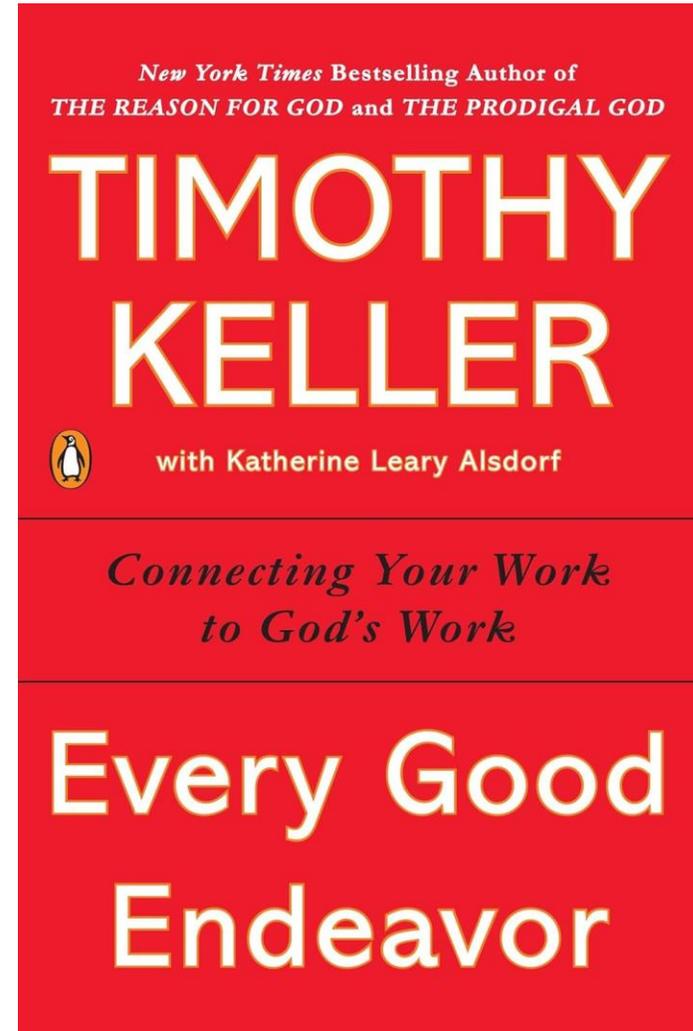
Introduction

- What does it mean to bring our faith to bear on our work?
- What is the role of the church in cultural engagement?
- How do we disciple people for public life?
- Christian should avoid an artificial dualism in our lives between the sacred and secular, and the private and public domains
- We are taught to obey Jesus in all areas of our lives
- Everything needs a narrative or a context to make sense, including our jobs or vocations

Connecting Our Story to God's Story

God's story into which we connect our story includes the biblical teachings on:

- Creation
- Fall
- Redemption
- Restoration



The Bible Storyline

- **Creation:** “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day” (Gen 1:31)
- **Fall:** “but God did say, You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die” (Gen 3:3)
- “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned” (Rom 5:12)

The Bible Storyline

- **Redemption:** “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians” (Ex 6:6-7)
- “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace” (Eph 1:7)

The Bible Storyline

- **Restoration:** “For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you **a new heart and put a new spirit in you**; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. ²⁸ Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God” (Eze 36:24-28)

The Bible Storyline

- “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free” (Lu 4:18)
- “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” ⁵He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true” (Rev 21:1-5)

Ways in which the Bible Shapes Our Work

- Faith provides an inner ballast without which work could harm us
- Self-worth tends to be corporate in Asian cultures—“work as a means to an end”—we want to be successful for our family
- Self-worth tends to be individualistic in Western cultures—“work as an end in itself”—we are who we make ourselves to be
- If work becomes our identity, it can puff us up if we succeed or destroy us if we fail
- Our identity is in Christ, not in our achievements or failures

Ways in which the Bible Shapes Our Work

- Faith gives dignity to all works without which we would be bored
- Martin Luther once said, “God feeds everything. He feeds us through the farmers. They are the fingers of God”
- God blesses us through the works of truck drivers, service workers, and migrant workers
- We need a theology that shows us all works are good works
- To do work as a Christian is to do everything well, even if it may be boring or difficult

Ways in which the Bible Shapes Our Work

- Faith gives a moral compass without which work could corrupt us
- In today's global economy, there is so much pressure for productivity and profitability
- Likewise, there is pressure for workers to cut corners and work in unethical ways
- Christians must form biblical values in our work ethics
- Unless Christians have a strong inner compass, we are going to have a lot of trouble navigating our socio-economic landscape

Ways in which the Bible Shapes Our Work

- Faith gives a worldview without which work will be meaningless
- How will your faith shape your work?
- What are the values that you bring into your work?
- What does it mean to be a Christian teacher in the public school?
- Being a teacher requires an understanding of what it means to be human, for one to flourish as a human being
- If you are a lawyer, you want to pursue justice
- And there will be a time for perfect righteousness and justice

Finishing Well

- Karl Jung describes the aging process as a psychological journey
- The point of “individuation” refers to a psychological shift from outer authority to inner truth
- Meaning cannot be derived from one’s roles, institutions, or external approval
- Meaning involves a psychological shift from doing to being
- An identity built on performance is an delusional
- Our experiences are now judged by resonance, not usefulness
- Life begins to make sense in the context of a larger story