

"Are You Enjoying God In Your Work?"

July 19, 2026 | Dawson Shields

All right, Valley Creek Church. Come on, man. It is good to be together. Let's go ahead and welcome each other in. Whether you're in Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, Denton, or online – it's good to be together, man. Hey, I'm excited to be with you guys today. My name is Dawson. I get to serve as one of our associate campus directors at the Denton Campus. And man, can I just say I am so grateful for this body. It's so good to be here – a part of the family at Valley Creek, a part of the life flow – what God's doing. God has done so much in me at this church. And so you guys – my family – you hold a special place in my heart. And so I'm excited to share a word with you today. It's been a great summer at Valley Creek. I've enjoyed it. I hope you've enjoyed it, too. And that's the series that we've been in: 60 Days of Enjoying God and the Life He's Giving You.

And so before we get to anything, I just want to say this: you have a great God and you have a great life to live. Come on. Like you have a great God and a great life to live. And I don't know what's happening in your life. I don't know what's going on, but man, if this series has done anything, it's just taken the truth that God is good and it's pushed it further into my heart. Like, man, I have been standing on that this summer and it's been so good. And so, I'm excited to continue the series. We only have two weeks left. This week and then next week and that's it. Summer's over after that. It doesn't feel like it, right? It only gets hotter, I know. But summer's over at Valley Creek. We're moving on to the next thing. Last week we talked about seasons and what season you're in. Enjoying the season that you are in right now. And what we're going to talk about today has really everything to do with the season that you're in, but also something that you're going to take with you into every single season of your life – and that's work. Yeah, work. I know – nobody leave. Everybody stay. Okay, don't leave. Work. And I know I get that reaction from work. So, can I just, uh, let's just start with this. Like, let's just call it what it is. Work is a massive part of our lives. Like, it's a really big deal if you really think about it. Everything comes from work. Provision comes from work. Relationships come from work. Resources come from work. Work brings progress, necessities, comfort, work. It plays a big role in your life, plays a big role in my life, and it plays a big role in our society. It's a really big deal.

And so, I just want to ask you this question to kick it off: do you enjoy your work? I know. Do you enjoy it? And remember, joy is a pervasive sense of well-being – meaning, no matter what, all is well. So, is that true about your work? Is that true? You see, if I took an honest poll in the room of everyone's heart towards work, I seriously doubt that a lot of us would say, "Man, I love work. I just enjoy it so much. It's the best thing ever." In fact, I bet a lot of us would say we're actually miserable – that we don't enjoy our work at all. And to be honest with you, it's really sad. It's really sad. Why? Because work does play such a big role in our lives. We will always have work to do and yet we don't really enjoy it at all.

You see, when I was 19 years old, I actually had my like first real moment of dread around work. 19 years old. Do you remember what being 19 is like? Or do you know what being 19 is like? You got your whole life ahead of you. You're looking out into the future. You're excited about what you're doing, where you're going. And if you're a 19-year-old kid, especially a boy, you

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make a lot of mistakes along the way, but you got a lot of passion, right? And so, you're going for it. And that was me at 19. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, but I was really excited about what God had for me. And I was excited to go discover that. You see, I was serving in our church, and I was serving in Students, and I served with this guy, and he was like, "Man, why don't you come to my, my men's circle with me." And so at 19, I'm like, "Great. I need all the wisdom I can get. I'm coming to your circle." And I loved that circle, guys. They were like the best dudes ever. They were all older than me. They were super successful in their careers. They had amazing families and they loved Jesus. Like, they had a real passion for Jesus and His Church. They served our church faithfully. Like, I wanted to be these guys when I grew up. But every time I came to circle, I started to notice a trend. And every time we talked about work, it was always negative – like it wasn't really fun to talk about. They would say things like, "Oh, you know, it's a job is what it is." Or, "You know, it's just a, it's a means to an end. I'm just, I'm just trying to get through it." Or, "I don't really like my boss. My co-workers are driving me crazy. I don't like what I'm doing right now. I want to do something else."

And that struck me because the way these men talked about work was the same way I talked about work at 19. Remember, these are guys who are well into their careers. They were at the place where I wanted to get. And so I started to think things like, man, Jesus, really, is this it? They're talking the same way I'm talking about work. Is this what's waiting for me? Like, why am I going to college? Why am I doing this? Like, I don't even know if I really want to work anymore. Can I just like chill and enjoy You? Can I do that? And so, I'm 19 years old and I was really excited about work, but all of a sudden that's taken away from me and I start dreading the idea of having a career. And I bet that's how a lot of us feel, right? And these guys, they talked about work not be like in that way, not because they weren't good guys, but because I think they looked at work through the lens of a curse.

Let me show you what I'm talking about. In Genesis 3, it says to Adam He said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat from the, eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

I bet this is how a lot of us feel about work – painful toil, thorns and thistles, cursed is the ground. This starts to become our narrative – our thought pattern – like literally what we're thinking about, about work. And your thought patterns, what you think about, your language, what you say – it literally becomes the things you believe about work. And I get it. There are real things, right? Work isn't easy. You have to deal with people. You have to deal with circumstances. Things come up unexpectedly. And so, I'm not saying work isn't hard. I'm not saying work is fun. What I am saying is I think we have let some like, uh, negative false narratives actually determine our beliefs about work. And you can't let a false narrative determine truth; you have to let the promises of God determine truth. You can't let painful toil

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determine what you believe about work. You have to let the promises of God determine about determine what you think about work. And so, what is the promise? What's the promise then of God about work? We'll get to that in a second.

The first thing I want to do is define work. What is work? Is it a job? Is it school? If like, if I'm in school right now, I don't have a job. Is it task? A way to provide? Is it something that we just have to do? Is it a burden? Is it a curse? Is it supposed to be awful? Like, am I supposed to feel this way about work all the time? Okay, work is a really big deal, but it's so much more than our first reaction. Work is all-encompassing. Work is like really, really big. Like, we got to take our thought life about work and we got to expand it. And so, before I get to the definition about work, I just want to say this. You have a life filled with meaningful things and meaningful people. And it's been given to you by a meaningful God who cares deeply and intimately about what you do with your life. You have a life filled with meaningful things and meaningful people. And there's a meaningful God who gave it to you. And so work, it fits into that life. So work is not something to get through. It's meant to be walked out. Life is meant to be lived fully. It's not just like I got to get to the finish line. No, you want to live your life fully, right? So I want to live work fully. And so what is work then? If it's meaningful, if it has purpose, what is it?

Well, work by definition is living out your created purpose by bringing the garden God has given you to a kingdom standard as a part of God's mission. Okay, I know that's a lot, so I'm going to say it again. You have time to write it down. I'm not, I'm not jumping to the next thing. Living out your created purpose by bringing the garden God has given you to a kingdom standard as a part of God's mission. Okay, let's break it down. Work is what you were created to do. It's what you were created to do. You're probably sitting here thinking like, "Dude, we just saw the curse verse. Like, don't we have to work because we've been cursed?" No. Actually, no. That couldn't be farther from the truth. You see, work shows up in the beginning of everything. In Genesis 2, before the curse, it says, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to," everybody say, "work it and take care of it."

Okay, let me ask you this – why the Garden of Eden? Why not like a beach with a cabana? Why a Garden of Eden? To work it. There is a garden to work. God created a garden and put man in it so that man could enjoy God and man could enjoy the work that he was given. Work was created by God. And we know everything that God created was good. It was very good. So work is a really good thing. Work is not a curse and you were created to work. In fact, worker is who you are. It's a part of your identity. And so worker is a really, really good thing. Think of it this way. And we'll get to more of this in a minute, right? Work does not mean job. Work does not mean job. Job is how we take care of ourselves, right? It's how we provide for our family. It's how we provide for ourselves. Work is how we live out our created purpose. Work was there in the beginning. God created work and work was good. Work was not a curse and it's still not a curse – which brings us to our next point.

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Work is how you tend the garden God has given you. Work is how you tend your garden. It's how you take care of it – how you shape it, how you mold it. What's your garden? It's a life God has given you. You remember what we said – your life is filled with meaningful things and meaningful people. Okay, that's your garden. You've been given a garden to work. And so, what does that mean? Uh, it's not just work is not just then how you make a living. Work is I it's like um it's how we steward, how we take care of how we tend to the life– the whole life God has entrusted to us. And so if you're a stay-at-home parent, you have work to do. You're like, I know, dude. It's hard. I know. But you don't have like this job title, like this occupation at a company, but you still have work to do. For those of us at that are working at a company that do have a job title – a description of what we're supposed to be doing – we don't clock out of work at 5pm. We're always on. We always have work to do because work is way bigger than a job. If you're at school right now, you're probably catching like, okay, work is like homework. Work is studying for a test. Yes, it is that, but it's so much more than that. It's the after school activities. It's the sports. It's the people you meet. It's the classroom.

Work is really big – and work is how we tend to the garden – the life that God has given us. In fact, in Ephesians, it says this. I love this verse. "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." God has given you a good work to do in your garden. Literally, He has prepared your life. He has taken it and He has given it to you and now He says, "Go and work it." That's how you tend to the life you, you've been given. And remember, our life is not small. It's grand. It's big. It's beautiful. And God has given us work to take care of it. And when I realize that work is what I was created for, and it's how I tend the garden God has given me, I'll start to see it as part of God's bigger mission.

Which brings us to the last part of our definition, right? As a part of God's mission. Work is a big part of God's mission. Your work is a big part of God's mission. Okay? 2 Corinthians says this. It says, "We are therefore Christ ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us." Do you know who wrote this? Paul. Paul wrote this verse. And when we think of Paul, we're like, "Dude, the ultimate disciple of Jesus." Everyone wants to be like that dude. He's amazing, right? He wrote most of the New Testament, man. He, he went on mission for God. He risked his life every single day for the kingdom – for the bigger mission that he was on, right? We think of that.

But do you know that Paul actually had a job? He had a job. He was known as a tentmaker. You see, he made tents and that's how he supported his ministry. And so I, I just, I love this concept. I love this thought about Paul because Paul never really talks about himself being a tentmaker. Like he doesn't open up in Romans and say, "Hi, I'm Paul the tentmaker." That's a really big deal because you were known for your craftsmanship, your trade, your job, what you did at that time. Like Jesus was known for being a carpenter. Peter was known for being a fisherman. And so being a tentmaker was a really big deal for Paul. But he doesn't open up with like, "Yeah, I'm a tentmaker." No. What does he say? He says, "I'm Paul the apostle of

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Christ. Paul a servant to Christ. Paul a slave to Christ." And so what does that tell me? Okay, that tells me that Paul understood my work is not just tentmaking. It's way bigger than that. It's a part of the mission of God. I'm a representative of Christ – an ambassador – every place I go. And so for you, if you do sales in the office, that's just not just your work. That's a part of your work, but it's way bigger than that. You are representing Christ in your office. If you're a teacher, you're not just a teacher. You are representing Christ to the next generation. You are an ambassador, a carrier of a kingdom culture in the classroom, in our education system. That's a really big deal. If you're a student, you're not just there to take tests and do good and get to college one day, man. You are meant to represent Christ in the hallways, in your friendships, in the classroom, to your teachers, to your friend's parents. It's a really big deal. And I, I love it this way. I heard this the other day. It says, "Man, I'll never have the access I once did." I heard this pastor, he was talking. He was like, "Man, I, I used to work at AT&T. That's what I was doing. I can go anywhere in the globe and talk about Jesus. I can't get into AT&T's building anymore. I don't have a code." So, where you're at right now, it's really important to carry Jesus with you into that place. You're on mission. You're on mission with God.

I love what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount. He says this in Matthew 5. "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Okay, let's talk about it. A town built on a hill. Another another translation would say set. You've been built. You've been set. You've been placed. You've been put. You've been picked by God to do what? To let your light shine. And your light – it can't be hidden. No matter what, your light can't be hidden. And so, bad day at work – can't hide your light. Boss is driving you crazy – can't hide your light. Classrooms going nuts – can't hide your light. You are a representative of Christ. You are bringing God with you everywhere you go.

And so, suddenly those meaningless things that you do on a daily basis – meaningless – they suddenly have real meaning to them – real meaning to your life, real meaning to your work. And so work is what we're created to do. It's how we tend our garden, the life God's given us, and it's a part of the mission of God. And so again, it's so important to let Jesus determine what is truth. It's so important to be like, man, what's your perspective on, on this, Jesus? What do You have to say? What do You say about work? And let Him define what that is.

And so, now that we've done that, now that we've defined what work is, now that we've like given it a real definition – a long one, I know – but it's a real definition. Now that we've done that, the next natural thing would be like, "Okay, here are the here's the five-step process on how to enjoy work." And you're probably waiting for that. Like, dude, give it to me. Work is terrible. I want to enjoy it. Give me the five-step process. I can't do that. I can't. Um, here's why – I'm 27 years old. There are people in this room who have been working longer than I've been alive. And no, don't laugh. That's not a dig at anybody's age. I'm not saying that. I'm just trying to bring attention to that's like I can't begin to fathom coming up here and pretending like I

got the five-step process, like I got it figured out. And so for those of you who have been working for a long time, I'm watching you. I'm looking to you. I'm learning from you. You're showing me how to work. I just figured out how to set my out of office by myself for the first time last year. Okay, I'm still figuring this thing out. Pastor Justin in Denton's like, "Yes, good job, Dawson." I didn't ask him this summer. I was like, "I got this." Outlook changed it up on me, okay? I, I didn't know what I was doing. To my peers, I got to say this. There is no five-step process. Like, you don't just find the perfect career and then everything's great. There isn't like this perfect path for you to go on, okay? No, there's not. And so instead of me coming up here and just being like, "Here's five ways. Go do it. Go try." I thought I would just come up here and maybe give you a different perspective. Can I do that? Okay.

Maybe we're too busy trying to enjoy work, enjoy it, like finding the perfect job, the perfect situation, the perfect scenario. Or maybe we're just too busy hating our work that we're missing God in all of it. Maybe instead of just focusing on my work, I got to get my attention back to Jesus. I got to look to Him. And I think a lot of times we just look to our lives. And your life is never going to bring you joy. You have to look to Jesus. And when you look to Jesus, then you will find your joy. I love what it says in the Psalms. It says this. This is really good. "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." We think once I have my desires, then I'll start delighting. It's not true. Delight always comes before desire. And the only way to find true delight is to look to Jesus – delighting in Him, falling in love with Him, listening to Him, walking with Him, and then I will have the desires. Think about Adam in the garden. It says that Adam would walk with God in the cool of the day. They walked together. What does that tell you? That tells you that they were in relationship. They did it together. Like God didn't just take Adam, throw him in there, and say, "Go do it, bro. I'll check back in later." No, they were in it together. And so, we have to look to God in the midst of our work. And so, I just thought I would come up here today and I thought I would share with you some ways where I've been looking to God in the midst of my work. And so, here, here's what I want to do. I just want to give you three ways. Three ways that I'm looking to God and maybe you can, too, in the midst of your work. You ready for them? Okay.

First one: growth. Growth. Romans 8:28. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." Okay, we like to use this verse in the midst of like trials, hard times, storms. We talked about that. We like to use this verse a lot for that. And that's a good verse for that. But in this season, I'm just like, this is just true all the time. Period. End of story. God is working for my good when everything feels great and when everything feels wrong. And so God is using work and God's working for my good. Like He's using work to shape and mold me to help me become more like Jesus. And that's a good thing, right? Right. That's definitely a good thing. And so I think of it this way, man. It's like when I was 16 to 21, I worked in a restaurant. That's what I did. And when I look back on it, I realize now that God was doing a deep work in there. Like He was shaping and molding me on a Friday night rush at a Tex-Mex restaurant called Chuy's. And I didn't see it then, but I see it now. Like doing everything with all my heart and learning to work with people

from different backgrounds and with different stories and learning how to, uh, forgive others and to ask for forgiveness. God was doing all of that while I was selling tacos. Man, like that's amazing.

And so now I'm looking at God. I'm like, God, what do You want to do now? Like how are You – what do I need to learn from You? What are You trying to do in this situation? What are You trying to show me? Instead of just plowing through and getting through it – no, I'm looking to God. God, what do You want to do with this? How is this for my good? And what I'm learning is like God is so good and God cares about me so much that He gave me work to help me become everything I was created to be. God gave you work to help you become more like Him, to help you become everything He created you to be. And so work is for our growth.

And then I love this next one. This one's really fun – creativity. "And God blessed them and said... be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it, using all its vast resources in the service of God and man." Okay. What I love about this verse is like this is God saying, "Okay, go. Go do it. I've given you everything you need. Now, let's go do it." Like, there's no training manual. There's no 15-step process on how to subdue the earth. You can't look it up on YouTube. And so why, why isn't there one? To spur on creativity. To spur on being creative with God. And like I love to think about Adam this way. Like if Adam walked with God in the garden and they were doing it together. I love like this picture of Adam just like waking up and being like, "Let's go. What do we want to do today, God? How do we want to solve this problem? There are things we need to take care of. Oh, and we haven't gone to that part of the garden yet. We got to go over there. And there's animals over there. They need names. We got to give them names. God, what should we call them? Every day we get to work with God, solving problems with Him and doing our work with Him and naming things and calling things out – literally creating the future with God. And so I think like the reason why we struggle with this one so much is like, man, God doesn't care. You think God cares about spreadsheets, Dawson? Yes, He does. He does. God cares about your classroom. He cares about your home. He cares about your office. He cares about your, uh, your school. He cares about what you're doing and why you're doing it. And He has invested interest in it – like He wants to work with you. And so we get to turn to Him and be like, "God, what do we want to do today?" Every single day you get to do that with God. How special. How cool.

And then lastly, this one's really important. It's rest. Resting with God. You're like, "That has nothing to do with work." No, has everything to do with work. Rest is a really big deal. Like, so let me ask you this. Do you rest from your work? And not like, "Yeah, dude, we took a vacation last week." No, every week. Are you resting from your work day? Like what? Like one day a week? That's called the Sabbath, right? God has gifted us the Sabbath. He gave it to us. And it's so important to Him that He actually puts it in the Ten Commandments. He's like, "This is a really big deal. We're not missing out on this one." In Exodus, it says this. It says, "For six days, work is to be done." Okay, work is to be done. You're going to work. That's the thing. But the seventh day is a day of Sabbath rest, holy to the Lord. Okay, so we must work, but God's also

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saying you must rest. It's both. We have to rest and we have to work. We have to work and we have to rest. Here's why – if I don't do the six days of work right, like if I'm not giving it all I got and working with all my heart, then the rest doesn't really matter. And if I take that one day of rest and I'm like I'm trying to rest my whole life, then work doesn't matter and a big part of your identity doesn't matter. And so God's like, "No way. No, both of them are really important. You cannot have one without the other." And so He has given you rest. He has given you the Sabbath. And so one day a week, I just want to challenge you. Rest with God. Enjoy your life with Him.

And you might be thinking, well, like, how do I do that? Okay, just enjoy God. What do you want to do? Wake up. Go outside. Spend time eating a good meal with the people you love. Watch a movie. Like go see your friends. Like for me, I love waking up on Saturday morning turning into college football and doing that and eating food and being with my friends and being with my family and just enjoying life, resting from my work. And now I get to go back to work filled up, ready to go. And so we don't rest from our lives, we rest for our lives. We rest with God. It's really important.

So growth, creativity, rest – all starts with Him. Going back, looking at Him, talking to Him, being with Him. You see, what I've been learning from this series is that if like if I'm just not enjoying God, then I just really can't enjoy my life. Like that always has to come first. And so I'm trying to do that in my work. I'm trying to like look at my work and be like, man, God, where am I not enjoying You in this? Where do I need to go back to You? Where do I need to look to You? What I love about Jesus is that He models this life so perfectly for us. Like He had, yes, He had three great years of ministry but you know what He did for before that for 30 years? He just enjoyed God and the life that was given to him. That's it. Like He woke up and got to work. He was a carpenter. Is that meaningless? No. That's a really part important part of His life. This is a really important part of your life, man. Don't miss out on it. Don't put work to the side of man like I can enjoy everything else and forget about this. No, God is inviting you to enjoy your work. But to do that, we have to look back to Him. We have to be like, God, I want to enjoy You and therefore enjoy the life that You've given me and therefore I'll start to embrace work and maybe if I can embrace work, I'll find ways to enjoy it.

You see, I kind of want to close with this. I have my own circle now. I have my own circle and young men come to my circle and we talk and we talk about work. And I never want young men in my circle hearing me talk negative about my work – what I was created to do. I want them to hear me talking about how much I'm enjoying God and this life that He's given me, including work. I want them to hear me talk about the ways I'm growing, how God is shaping and molding me. I want them to hear me talk about ways that I'm being creative, how I'm talking with God about this life and how we're going to go after it. I want them to hear me talk about how I'm enjoying God in my rest. How I have healthy rhythms in my life and I'm taking a break and I'm taking a step back just to enjoy Him. This is really important. You see, God has given you a meaningful life to work – to work. You were created to work. It's how you tend your

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garden – the life God's given you. And it's a part of the mission of God, advancing His kingdom. And if we're going to enjoy work, we must first enjoy God. And this has been our invitation all summer long, but don't let it just be an invitation for the summer. Let it be an invitation for your life – your whole life. Don't let it stop here, man. God enjoys you, and he's inviting you to enjoy Him, too.

Let's pray. Jesus, first off, man, thank you for modeling that work is a good thing to us. Thank you for working for the greater part of your life and just waking up after every day and getting after it. Like that shows me this is not meaningless. This is purposeful. And I have real purpose in my life and we have real purpose in our life. But somehow somehow, Jesus, we're missing out on enjoying work. And so teach us. Teach us. Show us how. Show us how to take the attention off of our lives and what's happening and just get our attention back to You. Help us enjoy You. And I'm believing God, man, as we are taking this, this revelation that we get to enjoy You. As we're leaning into that, man, we have, we are going to really enjoy our lives this fall. We're taking everything we learned from this summer and, God, we're going to apply it and we're going to move it forward and and by faith, we're moving forward and we will enjoy work. And so Jesus, we just, man, I'm, I'm just grateful. I'm grateful I have work – that my life is not mundane. It's not meaningless. No, it has real meaning. Thank You that You just invite us into it. And so Jesus, thank You for work and thank You for Your presence in Jesus' name. Amen.