

## **A Survey on Contextualizing the Theology of Work**

How are believers in very different work-world cultures to authentically live out the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ in their workplaces? First, they need a biblical theology of work. That is, they must grasp what God has revealed about everyday human work. How did work originate? What are God's purposes in our daily work?

Second, this biblical theology of work needs to be "contextualized" so that it speaks clearly within their culture. In a given culture, what does the gospel confront and correct? What does it affirm? What can be used as a "bridge" for the gospel? As Lesslie Newbigin has explained, contextualization communicates the gospel in such a way "that it speaks God's word to the total context in which people are now living and in which they now have to make their decisions."<sup>1</sup>

The following tables present the responses to an email survey sent in September 2011 to theology-of-work instructors in various countries around the world. The survey included questions on the culture in which the respondent teaches and dealt with the following areas:

- Compatibility with the Theology of Work
- Teaching the Theology of Work
- Worldview
- Attitudes Toward Work
- Attitudes Toward Business
- The Church and the Theology of Work

The cultures represented by the 9 who responded to the survey include China (Asia), Africa, Europe, the UK, and New Zealand. Therefore, the survey provides insight into both major non-Western and Western cultures. Each page lists one of 25 survey questions followed by the responses to it by geographic area/culture. The responses appear as originally submitted, with only light editing for clarity, punctuation, and grammatical correctness.

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<sup>1</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 142.

**QUESTION 1:**

*What characteristic of the culture have you found to be harmonious with living out the Christian faith in the work world?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>A commitment to hard work and a seriousness about work. High regard for seniority and respect for older employees.</p> <p>Relationships. Work ethic.</p> <p>The concept of servant leadership. Friendship. Laughter. Wisdom</p> <p>Striving for excellence, responsibility, and duty for work. Respect for doing work morally.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>In the pre-colonial era, Africans viewed work as honorable and hard workers were rewarded handsomely. However, after being subject to inhuman treatment under the colonial masters, most Africans started thinking that work is “punishment.”</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>New Zealanders appreciate friendliness, tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and integrity.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>Work in the Nigerian African context has been a main source of identity for individuals and communities. Merely hearing someone’s name can tell the kind of work the person does or what his/her family is known for. This, though, is changing fast in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>On the whole, this is a culture that values hard work, enterprise, and integrity. But these characteristics are not as strong in the culture as they have been at times in the past.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>A reasonably strong work ethic. An increasingly just legal system.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 2*

**QUESTION 2:**

*In your teaching of the theology of work, how have you affirmed those characteristics [identified in responses to Question 1]?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>By comparing the positive work ethics of my culture with the Christian faith.</p> <p>(1) I have drawn upon the emphasis that the Christian Faith places on relationships and highlighted parallels. (2) Similarly the teachings of the Christian faith resulted in the Protestant Work Ethic which is similar to the Chinese work ethic , except that the Protestant work ethic emphasizes individualism whereas the Asian work ethic emphasizes the family.</p> <p>Thru case studies and role plays, we see that the above helps us in daily living.</p> <p>No particular need to affirm these values.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	I am encouraging my audiences to rediscover the role and meaning of work in the African society.
<b>New Zealand</b>	We specifically engage in cultural analysis and do a wide range of case studies that illustrate both positive and negative reactions between Christians and the working culture in New Zealand.
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	Very strongly drive home the point of the Biblical heritage of work in Africa which we seem to be neglecting.
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	Yes, we do affirm them.
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	By emphasizing work as co-creativity with God, which allows progress toward a healthier and more productive world.

*See Next Page for Question 3*

**QUESTION 3:**

*What characteristics of the culture have you found to be incompatible with living out the Christian faith in the work world?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>Over-emphasis on the utility and priority of the family interest at the expense of all social groups.</p> <p>The supernatural and filial piety.</p> <p>Money-grabbing / insecurity, anger, cynicism.</p> <p>Work is merely for self-actualization, personal fulfillment, and earning materialistic means. A lack of a vision of social transformation through work.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>Gender inequality.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>Tolerance now has such a high value that attempts to win someone to another faith and especially Christianity are seen as intolerant and bigoted. The working culture, especially white European, is also strongly against any form of moral judgment regarding the behavior of others, especially sexual orientation, marital status and racism, although underlying racism is there in many settings.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>Work is fast becoming a mere source of livelihood; decisions of what work to do and where to work is being determined by how much it pays as opposed to the Christian worldview of work being a call from God and means of cooperating with God in management of the affairs of the earth.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>Selfishness, materialism, and moral indifference.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>A legacy of corruption, abdication of responsibility to the state, and rapidly increasing consumerism.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 4*

**QUESTION 4:**

*In your teaching of the theology of work, how have you confronted or transformed those characteristics [identified in response to Question 3]?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>By bringing awareness of these negative ethics and contrasting them with those in the Christian faith.</p> <p>In regard to the supernatural, it is necessary to deal with spiritual warfare in relationship to workplace practices and symbols which are a sign of good fortune in Chinese culture but which are deemed evil in Christian beliefs (e.g., the dragon).</p> <p>By asking, What is the source of our anger or cynical feelings?</p> <p>Work is meaningful primarily because we are cooperating and co-working with God for fulfilling his purpose on earth and in our lives. Doing work Christianly has practical social benefits, transforming people's lives and the society.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>By emphasizing on the need for everyone "to put on the mind of Christ" – humility.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>We have emphasized the building of relationships, worked on ways of maintaining personal integrity without judgment of others, and also looked closely at priorities in relating to others. We have explored ways in which we can build healthy and positive relationships with others by looking at the actions of Jesus towards those he met.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>By directing my students' attention back to the biblical position and elucidating the effect of the neglect of this biblical position in the lack of relevance of the Church, in spite of her overwhelming physical presence.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>By exposing and challenging them; by promoting virtue ethics as distinct from consequentialist ethics; by teaching a well-rounded, balanced biblical theology of work.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>By teaching corruption as a justice issue, personal responsibility as an accountability issue before God, giving, and international solidarity. By teaching fair trade as a practical outworking of this.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 5*

**QUESTION 5:**

*How does the working environment positively or adversely affect human dignity?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>Singapore has a similar if not comparable working environment to some of the most developed economies.</p> <p>The working environment in Singapore is neutral. However in many parts of Asia, human dignity is debased because making money has greater priority than the dignity of workers. Thus many workers work in squalid conditions for a mere pittance.</p> <p>Seeing the income gap rise or offenders/nasty people getting off scot free.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>With colonialism, capitalism and corruption, most Africans have lost the meaning of hard work and enthusiasm to embrace work as a service to God, service to others and service to self.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>Sadly there are a number of issues that can undermine human dignity in the New Zealand workplace. Bullying is one of them. Control behavior is another, as is competitiveness. Racism is occasionally a problem. Migrant communities also have some issues regarding fair wages and human rights.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>A good working environment gives the human a sense of worth and a feeling of being appreciated for what is done. A poor working environment debases the human being and reduces him/her to a tool.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/UK</b>	<p>Human dignity is adversely affected by alienation, exploitation, fragmentation and regimentation. These characteristics are not as prominent in the Western European working environment as they used to be but they still linger on.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>I cannot generalize, since this depends on the specific workplace.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 6*

**QUESTION 6:**

*If you could offer just three insights to a visiting professor on how to teach the theology of work in this culture, what would you say?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>1. Be aware of the history and culture. 2. Contrast and compare it with the Christian faith. 3. Be a student not just a teacher</p> <p>1. Deal with the clergy/laity divide. 2. Look more closely at integrity and business ethics. 3. Deal with the place of relationships in business (e.g., <i>guanxi</i>).</p> <p>Understand what weakness and meekness is. Psalm 37 is helpful.</p> <p>1. To expound on the meaning and spiritual significance of work from multiple, relevant theological perspectives (e.g., merely the vocation angle may not be adequate for sustenance workers). 2. Multi-dimensional Christian ethics and ethical decision-making process for facing difficult dilemma situations and structural sins. 3. A theology of work that brings about social transformation.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>1. Highlight the African pre-colonial view of work. 2. Emphasize the need for “good stewardship.” 3. Emphasize the need to embrace humility.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>1. Let the students provide case studies and examples of workplace issues. 2. Demonstrate awareness of the nature of New Zealand society that aims firstly to be one people, secondly aims to recognize biculturalism, giving full place to the Maori heritage of our nation, and thirdly aims at multiculturalism with a very large Pacifica population and a diverse migrant community, especially from Asia. 3. Demonstrate the counter-cultural nature of Christianity, providing both an alternative to current cultural norms and also a genuinely attractive way of living as a full member of society as a Christian.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>1. Be ready to confront the worldview that prohibits many occupations. 2. The sacred/secular divide is still very strong. 3. Pastors and other leaders of churches will pick issues with the ministry of all believers; even where they agree, it is still a mental assent.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/UK</b>	<p>1. Understand and teach the “whole counsel of God,” applying the Bible with imagination and rigor. 2. Understand your culture – its distinctive strengths, nuances and foibles. 3. But because business is international, you must also relate your culture to other cultures.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>1. Understand the legacy of communism. 2. Prepare to deal with consumerism. 3. Think about corruption from a theological and biblical, not just ethical, perspective.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 7*

**QUESTION 7:**

*How might the teaching and application of the theology of work  
Subvert the status quo of the culture?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>In my culture work is a key component of our lives but tends to be more influenced by culture and history rather than by faith. The theology of work challenges such priority.</p> <p>The manner in which business is done will be changed.</p> <p>It takes away the power/triumphal attitudes that we may harbor. Christians grow when we learn to listen to God and colleagues at the workplace.</p> <p>More respect and valuing of manual work and sustenance workers. Work does not merely have instrumental value; it is integral to people's meaningfulness and purpose of life.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>Impressing upon recipients to embrace gender equality.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>It provides a fresh view of the place work has in human life, being God's plan from the beginning. It is also a way in which all members of society can contribute, not only for the outlet for their own gifts and personalities, but also a way in which all can contribute to a stronger society, in line with God's original intentions. Further, a healthy theology of rest also provides balance in a society that is often neglectful of rest.</p> <p>A genuine theology of work also explores the reasons for work within human society running counter to the prevailing view of work as a means of supporting a highly materialistic view of life.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>Profoundly. For some it will require a total overhaul, if not a complete breakdown of the present structures</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>By challenging culture to be God-centred rather than man-centered; by challenging the rich to care for the poor; by promoting integrity which exposes corruption; by questioning the dominant corporate model of the public limited company.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>Prosperity is a gift, not primarily a reward, since God is the source of all we have. Consumerism without control leads to un-shalom.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 8*

**QUESTION 8:**

*How do you encourage a body of believers to discover, struggle with, and resolve theological issues of the work world instead of imposing your own answers?*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question****Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Bring awareness about our assumptions on work and question the cultural and historical premises of our work.

Get them to discuss among themselves. Discovery that these issues are faced by their peers and the solutions that are suggested will be more relevant to them than the answers provided by the teachers.

Sharing our joys and struggles openly in trusted settings. Understanding why we go to work (i.e., who God created us to be) and examining the personal and system shortfalls in work.

A fresh reading of the biblical texts; case studies; discussion forums; different role modeling (real stories).

**East and  
Central Africa**

We embrace the "Learning Cycle," a method of learning by doing. In this method, trainees discover knowledge for themselves and develop skills by actively participating in the learning process. In fact, all those who have attended our theology-of-work classes are not only teaching about work, but are also actively engaged in human work.

**New Zealand**

I begin on this by outlining the core issues. Because my course is entitled "Marketplace Christianity," it deals with issues wider than, but inclusive of, a theology of work. I deal with five core issues: theology of work, clergy and laity, call, mission, and the place of the Kingdom of God. In terms of developing a theology of work, we explore how we can bring the various areas of theology to bear on a theology of work. For example, how does our eschatology affect the way we view work? Students work on their own theological framework in each area. We also have a very wide reading list and students have to provide reading reviews on at least 500 pages of reading. Each week we have several case studies and there is a wide variety of group activities designed to have students engage at depth with the issues. I also teach seminars in churches and use some of the above techniques and extensive PowerPoints, case studies, video clips, etc., to help people get to grips with key questions. In other words, my main technique is to pose questions that challenge traditional views and then provide a range of resources for people to use in exploring those questions further.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

A strong and loving invitation to dialogue and honest reflection.

<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	By teaching them a relevant, vibrant theology of work but encouraging them to apply this to their own particular working environments and business sectors.
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	Currently focusing on workplace justice and international generosity. Emphasizing that Slovakia is not poor but a rich country that needs to take responsibility in a global world.

*See Next Page for Question 9*

**QUESTION 9:**

*What have you found to be the most difficult theology of work concept to communicate in this culture? What makes it so difficult?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>That work is good is God's eyes, countering the duality idea that spiritual is good and work is bad. It is difficult because many churches adopt this duality and perpetuate it through their teachings and communication.</p> <p>The most difficult theology of work concept to communicate in the Asian culture is that of integrity. In Asian cultures, giving of bribes is viewed as necessary. Convincing the believer that it is possible to operate in a Christ-like manner without suffering loss is vital.</p> <p>Why work? Not just to make money but to see work as God's gift. This is tough, as the culture in China (presently) has no room for God.</p> <p>Understanding work from a largely creation theology rather than a narrow salvation theology perspective. Most churches are deeply immersed in the salvation theology tradition and are afraid that creation theology will lead to natural theology.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>None! People are receiving all the theology-of-work principles with gladness, but many people are struggling to be humble.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>Possibly the most difficult is the way in which a Christian's call is related to their work. How do I know what I am meant to be doing? How do I know this is God's place for me? How do I test this and how do I apply this day-to-day? It is difficult because the old dualism that only pastors and missionaries are "called" is deeply embedded in much evangelical thinking. This is enhanced by the sacred/secular dualism as well.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>The concept that puts all work on the same level of importance. The reason being the honor, respect, and notoriety accorded pastors and others involved in church related occupations.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>The relevance of Jesus' cross and resurrection. Christians tend to view this as so holy and special that they separate these events off from ordinary life.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>Servant leadership. The legacy of Communism leaves behind a strong, hierarchical way of behaving in the workplace.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 10*

**QUESTION 10:**

*What worldview assumptions are most critical for a theology-of-work teacher to understand?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>The culture and its historical setting and the rising tide of globalization.</p> <p>The divide between the clergy and the laity and the priesthood of all believers. To a lesser extent calling is also important.</p> <p>Post-Modernist thinking – e.g., that truth is what works for you.</p> <p>Work is for personal actualization or fulfillment rather than as a response to callings (transcendent or secular). Success is seen as a result of personal agency, strength and efforts. Not much room for God’s grace and providence here.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>God is a Worker; work is an act of worship; work brings dignity; and work brings joy.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>Work is God’s idea. Work has a place in the Kingdom of God. All of God’s people are called. God loves all people and his means of working with them is incarnational through his people and the workplace is a crucial part of this. The church is both gathered and scattered and in its gathered form, prepares people for living in the marketplace including the workplace. All of God’s people are ministers.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>The sacred/secular schism.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>The supremacy of the so-called “bottom line”; the idea that to be accepted Christians have to keep quiet about their faith commitments and submit to a so-called neutral, secular set of values.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>Shalom as the goal, workplace justice, international value, and supply chain justice.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 11*

**QUESTION 11:**

*To what degree do sacred/secular, clergy/laity distinctions affect the thinking of the typical Christian in the work world?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>This duality is common among Christians in Singapore.</p> <p>It has resulted in many believers thinking that they are incapable of ministering in the workplace.</p> <p>The church forgets that Christ spent lots of time with working people.</p> <p>Used to be very strong in the past. Now changing gradually.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>They greatly affect the effectiveness and productivity of marketplace Christians, as well as denying them the opportunity to fully experience the joy of the Lord in their work.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>These are deeply embedded in much evangelical thinking, leading many Christians to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel somewhat frustrated in their workplace wondering whether this is God's best for them or not.</li> <li>• Treat work as an interlude between gathered church meetings and the activity in the gathered church being of greater value than their activities elsewhere.</li> <li>• Leave much of the theological thinking to the pastor instead of engaging with the pastor in thinking through significant issues that affect the workplace.</li> <li>• Simply accept the fact the workplace has very little place within most church activities and services.</li> </ul>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>To a very great degree, as it has profoundly limited the effective communication of the gospel truth and attendant socio-political relevance. This distinction isolates the Christian from the world he/she is living in and called by God to reach.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>They are very pervasive, but it is not sufficient to try to break them down; one needs a persuasive theology of work to fill the gap.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>Big time.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 12*

**QUESTION 12:**

*To what degree do parental occupations and expectations (or those of ancestors) influence the work of their children?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>Very much in the Chinese culture. Education and work is viewed as utilitarian rather than an end in itself.</p> <p>Generally this has little influence except in the case of family businesses where children are expected to take over the business from their parents. However children are still expected to aim to get good jobs which usually means being a professional (e.g., doctor, lawyer, etc.).</p> <p>Certainly so in the Asian setting – we are not really interested in education only in what fruits/salary/jobs that the education gives us.</p> <p>Parental expectation was quite influential in the past, but its effect is fading. Still it may be more salient here than in Western individualistic cultures.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>Depending on the joy experienced by parents, many children are influenced by the occupations of their parents. This notwithstanding, most pastors' children in Africa are not influenced by the occupations of their parents.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>Not a lot in our society. The only time it shows is where: a parent is a pastor or professional Christian worker. In some Pacifica communities, children of pastors have difficulty escaping a very traditional form of church life so they can develop their own thinking. To a lesser extent, some from less advantaged backgrounds take a little longer to develop confidence in their own call and giftings.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>The African Culture has the basic assumption that children should inherit the occupation of their parents. Most children are raised and influenced to take on the same professions as their parents or the parents' preferences. This is changing, but it is still largely regarded as rebellion when children refuse.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/UK</b>	<p>They do affect them, but I think expectations and attitudes of peers are more influential.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>Education and elitism play a big role in the church. To not continue on to get a Masters or often a PhD is considered a failure.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 13*

**QUESTION 13:**

*To what degree is the human image of God-as-worker reflected in the culture's unspoken assumptions about working?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>Certainly not in my culture.</p> <p>There is no connection between the human image of God-as-worker and the unspoken assumptions about working in Chinese culture. Gods in Chinese religions are viewed as capricious and tend to cause trouble among humans much like the way the Greeks viewed their gods. However unlike the Greeks who viewed work as a curse, work is viewed positively.</p> <p>Not very well reflected. We still treat employees as economic units of production.</p> <p>None.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>Most people do not see God as a Worker in a practical sense.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>In our society, very little indeed. Our society is now one of the most secular western societies in the world with very low church attendance, a poor view of the church and Christianity, and a competitive and materialistic attitude towards work and money.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>This image is still distorted to a large extent. Work is still seen as what we have to do as opposed to what we need to do on God's behalf.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/UK</b>	<p>Very little reflection. I don't think culture views God as a worker.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>People here work to eat and get ahead, rather than to serve and co-create. So not much.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 14*

**QUESTION 14:**

*In this culture, what does having a job mean?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>Status and recognition. It is now strongly influenced by post-modernity.</p> <p>Having a job means having the ability to provide for oneself and one's family.</p> <p>Being employed and able to feed the family; saving for old age.</p> <p>Being useful, productive, valuable, and having a means of living.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	<p>An employment where one earns wages/salary.</p>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<p>Having a job means security. While this is a strong welfare society so that people without work are not left to starve, being on welfare creates a ceiling on possibilities. Work is also a very strong source of identity, and people without work face significant loss of identity and self worth.</p>
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	<p>To have a job is to have a source of livelihood and at best some measure of dignity.</p>
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	<p>Being in paid employment.</p>
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	<p>Provision for self and family, perhaps self-actualization in a minority.</p>

*See Next Page for Question 15*

**QUESTION 15:**

*What, if any, value judgments does this culture make between manual and mental work?*

**Geographic  
Area/Culture**

**Response to Question**

**Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Duality as well. Mental work is superior over manual. Manual work is poorly paid. Education is important, as it helps to ensure a better paying job.

In Chinese societies as in many Asian cultures with Confucian roots, learning is highly valued. Therefore mental work is valued way above manual work.

In Asian culture, mental work is lowly (and it is tough).

Mental work is on the top of the ladder and manual work the bottom. Manual work is typically seen as for those who do not succeed academically.

**East and  
Central Africa**

None.

**New Zealand**

The main judgment relates more to earning power than to the type of work. If manual work brings in big money, then it is valued. If however it brings in only the minimum wage, then it is seen as a hindrance to progress. This is the society of the individual, the self-made man, the pioneer settler. We are valued for what we can do with what we have, the capacity to work hard to realize our dreams. Our Prime Minister grew up in a state housing setting (government provided, low cost rental housing) and is now a multimillionaire. Our society hugely values those who succeed against the odds. Value is placed on where you end up, not where you start. On the other hand, some of those who make a great deal while contributing very little of concrete value, are becoming objects of criticism, particularly financiers, loan company directors, property developers, etc. Nothing new of course!

**North Central  
Nigeria**

Manual work is seen to be for the lowly, and it is neither respected nor well remunerated. It is seen more as slavery while mental work carries a lot of respect and better remunerated. The word "laborer" is used and viewed with scorn. It won't be applied to a mental worker for instance.

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

We now have a very small manufacturing base, so the traditional working class has shrunk. The service sector has grown, especially financial services (which is seen as mental work) and retailing/restaurants (which is seen as more manual). The value judgments made by the culture are about adding genuine value through one's work; the mental/manual distinction is not particularly significant.

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

Very strong. Manual work is considered the sphere of those who have failed.

*See Next Page for Question 16*

**QUESTION 16:**

*How would you describe how the culture views the place of women in the work world? How might you have addressed this issue?*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question**

**Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Women are recognized more and more in Singapore for their contribution. It is not uncommon to find women senior executives in banking, accounting and leadership.

Traditionally, the view was that woman should not work. This has changed with Western influence and today the view of women in the workplace would be much like that in the Western world. This is not an issue today.

Women have fairly equal opportunities in most jobs but there are still less women in leadership.

The work world is very much open for women. They are seen as especially suitable for work that requires communication skills, detail-mindedness, and human touch.

**East and  
Central Africa**

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**New Zealand**

Ours is very much an equal opportunity society, though there does remain a glass ceiling for women in some areas, especially top executive areas except government. Generally the culture offers women pretty much that equal opportunity today with the church at times lagging a little behind, especially in church leadership. Within our college/seminary as a whole, women are encouraged to take equal place so that it is no longer either an issue of theology or opportunity. However some local churches still retain distinctions that make it very difficult for women in leadership.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

The culture does not expect a woman to pursue career to any appreciable degree. When this is done, it is considered special, and the woman might find it difficult if not impossible to find a man to marry her. Even the woman in a home-making role does not see the role as of any significance. I will address this issue by emphasizing the biblical co-regency mandate of the male and female man.

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

The role of women is regarded increasingly highly. They are seen as bringing positive attitudes to the workplace (e.g., in team-working) but they are still under-represented at the highest levels (e.g., company boards). I make sure I don't talk about work as a male preserve.

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

Hard to answer this as a man. But we have a woman prime minister, women CEOs and a lot of women cabinet ministers. So it seems that women have a fairly good standing.

*See Next Page for Question 17*

**QUESTION 17:**

*Does the prevailing culture press people toward underwork (slothfulness), hard work (with appropriate rest), or overwork (workaholism)? What explains the trend you identified?*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question**

**Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Workaholism is praised and expected.

The prevailing culture would tend to press people toward overwork. The ability to provide for one's family is highly prized and thus success is measured by material possessions. Consequently people push themselves to work extremely hard to acquire things in order to be viewed as successful.

In Singapore the pressure is toward working hard and doing more. Measuring productivity and KPIs ( Key Performance Indicators) are an expected part of work life.

Overwork. Hong Kong tops the list as the place where people work the longest hours.

**East and  
Central Africa**

Underwork.

**New Zealand**

The tendency is towards overwork as people "want to get ahead" and to have all the toys to which they believe they are entitled. Materialism, fed by the advertising world, has led to this as has happened in the rest of the world. Technology also contributes by offering endless new gadgets which become "must haves," especially for children. The end result is that to sustain the average lifestyle expectations, both parents need to work and this often leads to stress, over-tiredness and compensation with expensive holidays and toys.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

It does encourage slothfulness in my context – able-bodied beggars get stipends from begging. There is high dependency attitude strengthened by religions, especially Islam. Rest is alien to the culture here because of the practice of work and pay; even those in office jobs sometimes monetize their holidays due to prevalent economic challenges. Workaholism is basically cultural and has been further compounded by advancement in technology, which allows people to keep working even at home. Leisure is considered as being lazy and wasteful.

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

Financial pressures mean organizations are trying to do more with fewer people, so the tendency for those still in work is toward overwork. This isn't necessarily because people are workaholics, just that there's a lot for them to do.

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

Big urban-rural divide. In urban areas, overwork is common. In rural areas, where economic activity is at a lower level, underwork is common.

*See Next Page for Question 18*

**QUESTION 18:**

*To what degree does the culture influence the responsibility people feel concerning their work? (For example, is poor performance attributed to a malevolent spirit?)*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question**

**Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Strong work ethics, poor performance is attributed generally to laziness.

People view their work performance as attributable to themselves. However they are also aware of supernatural forces that can affect the performance in the workplace (i.e., not just themselves but others as well). Thus offerings are made at certain points in time to these spirits. There is the "Hungry Ghosts month," where it is believed that evil spirits are released to roam the world looking for food. So food offerings are made to appease them; otherwise their workplace could be disturbed by these spirits.

Very much indeed. Most (especially older) people feel they have a moral duty or obligation for completing their work on time and in good quality. Failing to do so is a misconduct and a disgrace.

**East and  
Central Africa**

To a lesser degree. However, people who have been educated by their parents or communities feel obliged work hard or even loot through corruption to contribute to societal developments.

**New Zealand**

No such underlying themes here except to a very small extent in some areas of indigenous and migrant culture. The indigenous culture and the underclass section of society will tend to look to historic injustices for the failure to get ahead. Other than that the mainstream culture emphasizes success through hard work, making each individual responsible for their own success or failure.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

This will depend on the work sector. In the public sector, poor performance is generally over looked due to system failure, while the private sector demands high responsibility from workers and poor performance might earn a sack.

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

People are expected to be responsible, and generally speaking they are.

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

The culture presses people toward hard work or even overwork.

*See Next Page for Question 19*

**QUESTION 19:**

*In what ways, if any, has Western colonialism affected attitudes toward entrepreneurship, innovation, and experimentation in the work world?*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question****Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Singapore was under the British. Many look to the Western model as the key model for entrepreneurship and innovation. Most aspire to become civil servants, as it is the most respectable.

While Western colonialism has resulted in an attitude of servitude, it has also put into place stability and a legal framework which allows legitimate businesses to thrive. The contrast can be seen between Singapore and Hong Kong where the majority of the populations are Chinese. Even after colonialism has been gone for decades, Singaporeans who are used to the Government making many decisions which impact directly on their lives, tend to prefer working for others in contrast to the people in Hong Kong where the Government rules with a light hand. The Hong Kongers are well known for their entrepreneurship.

The local culture likes status quo. Not that into innovation, but there is the idea that a work well done will help others.

I do not see Western values contradicting traditional Chinese values in relation to the world of work, though the techniques used may be different.

**East and  
Central Africa**

In many ways, including helping to breed corruption and individualism.

**New Zealand**

As a thoroughly western nation with colonialism well behind us, we are in much the same state as other similar nations. However our particular history has led to a spirit of individualism and innovation and we have a strong history of innovation both for our domestic market and for overseas. The Maori people, the people on the wrong end of western colonialism, are more recently beginning to exhibit the same entrepreneurial spirit in business and innovation.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

To a large extent. The issue of entrepreneurship and innovation are new after over 50 years of independence. The usual practice is to job hunt after school. It is changing but quite slowly. When thoughts of experimentation and innovation come up, the first question is how to get money.

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

N/A – we are the Western colonizers. In Hong Kong I see this as having a positive impact, largely in tandem with other influences (e.g., Chinese Confucianism).

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

Not colonized, though now the Western consumer mindset has a large influence.

*See Next Page for Question 20*

**QUESTION 20 :**

*How would you describe the cultural stance toward profit-making?*

**Geographic  
Area/Culture**

**Response to Question**

**Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Profit is good and respected.

In Asian culture, particularly Chinese culture, making money is viewed very positively. In fact the worker is expected to make all sacrifices necessary, including neglect of family, to make as much money as possible.

Profit is necessary and is good. It is the benchmark to efficiency.

Profit-making is regarded as the golden rule in the local work world.

**East and  
Central Africa**

Generally, in an African society, philanthropy takes precedence over profit-making.

**New Zealand**

Profit making is seen as the prime task of the business world, but when it occurs at the expense of others, it provokes strong reaction. The recent collapse of a number of high profile finance companies has hurt a great number of ordinary investors and there has been strong public condemnation of those behind the companies.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

It is primary to business. It is the reason for the venture, so people tend to engage in the more lucrative ventures.

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

Generally positive. For a minority who don't appreciate business or are anti-capitalist, profit is suspect.

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

Regarded positively, though those who are very wealthy likely stole their wealth upon the collapse of Communism.

*See Next Page for Question 21*

**QUESTION 21:**

*After teaching the theology of work in your context, are you still discovering new (contextual) questions that need to be addressed? What methods are you using in your classes to draw those questions out of your students.*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question**

**Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Still finding my way.

I teach in different countries where contextual issues differ. For example, in Singapore, the issue of integrity is less important than in Indonesia where corruption is rife. In China, the issue of *guanxi* is more relevant than in Singapore. Therefore I am discovering new (contextual) questions all the time. I incorporate a time for questions and answers during my teaching sessions. Usually from what is raised it is possible to identify the contextual issues.

We ask – What hopes and aspirations (and caution) do you have for your own children? Would you want them to do the same work as you? Why and why not?

Different ecologies in different trades and industries. Specific structural issues or sins for specific positions, functions or occupations. These pop up naturally during the class when people are trying to integrate theology of work into their real-life situations.

**East and  
Central Africa**

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**New Zealand**

Yes, I am still discovering new areas of concern and interest. Most of it emerges as we hear the stories of students, allow extensive opportunity for questions and comments, and use many examples out of current events and real life situations. We teach the course both on site and by distance and use a wide variety of methods to encourage interaction. All our class notes are issued at the start of the course. Each lecture is three hours long and consists of extensive interaction with the notes. PowerPoints, video clips, DVDs, etc., are used extensively. Small group dynamics are employed, and all students are linked in online discussion forums with opportunity for adding comments for all students each week.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

Absolutely. The primary method has been the emphasis placed on the questions put forward by the twin mandate of Creation and Redemption. The answers always show work issues: the kind of work, the place of work, call, remuneration, and etc.

<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	Yes – I'm learning all the time, through a variety of means: conversations, reading, Q & A sessions, travel.
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	A new generation are taking their values and attitudes from work experience in Western Europe and the internet/social media. Those under 25 are more interested in serving or development work roles.

*See Next Page for Question 22*

**QUESTION 22:**

*In the culture of the work world, in what areas does sin manifest itself most clearly?*

<b>Geographic Area/Culture</b>	<b>Response to Question</b>
<b>Asia/Singapore/ China/Hong Kong</b>	<p>Every way – self-interest, egoism, betrayal.</p> <p>Lack of integrity and idolatry – mammon is worshipped.</p> <p>Omission—we forget to act justly and to care for others and the environment. We give up, thinking these ills of society are too big for us to care about. We forget to share the fruit of our labor with have-nots. Commission—pride in profession. Looking down on others. Blind pursuit of dollars and luxury/brands.</p> <p>Plutocracy, monopoly, unfair and unjust competition.</p>
<b>East and Central Africa</b>	Through corruption.
<b>New Zealand</b>	Bullying, sexual harassment, greed, power struggles that attack individual dignity and integrity. A wider migrant and cross-cultural mix has also brought more problems with bribes, unjust working conditions, and scams.
<b>North Central Nigeria</b>	Mostly in terms of ethics and financial fraud. This is due to the lack of integration of faith and work.
<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	Dishonesty, greed, foolishness.
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	Greed.

*See Next Page for Question 23*

**QUESTION 23:**

*How would you describe the predominant attitude of the clergy toward non-ecclesiastical work?*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question**

**Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Duality, spiritual is good and secular work is rather suspicious, though there is a growing awareness of this duality. Ignorance of secular work is another problem.

Generally looked down upon as not being as spiritual as ecclesiastical work.

Most clergy still feel that what happens at the service time is very important, and devotions properly done. These should help Christians to be better, joyful workers.

Non-ecclesiastical work is a this-worldly necessity without eternal value. It supports the family, the church and more importantly workplace is a field of Christian witness (direct evangelism or creative access mission). However, there is a slow emerging trend that affirms doing work Christianly is doing God's work.

**East and  
Central Africa**

Negative, given that most Christian leaders in Africa think that "ONLY" preaching and praying are God's Work.

**New Zealand**

Most would recognize the importance of the workplace and give at least lip service to a sensible theology of work. However many still do not give a significant place to work issues within services, do not direct pastoral care to workplace needs, and would tend to see ministry as work done within an ecclesiastical framework. Most evangelicals would at least agree to workplace teaching in principle, if it were pointed out to them, but in practice still act as though only a special group are called and the work of the gathered church is the main agenda of the Kingdom. One of the problems is that most nod their heads wisely at the right times when workplace teaching is given, but their crowded agendas and the need for church survival allow for little more.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

The attitude that sees those in non-ecclesiastical work as tools for fulfilling the ecclesiastical vision.

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

On the whole, they're not very interested.

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

Ignorance, but non-hostile.

*See Next Page for Question 24*

**QUESTION 24:**

*What, if any, religious teachings (Christian church or traditional) contradict biblical truth about human work? And what negative impacts are these teachings having on the society?*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question****Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

The divide between the clergy and the laity. Work is primarily to provide for the worker and their families and perhaps even churches and ministries. Work itself has no intrinsic value. The workplace is a place for evangelism. [While this is correct, it should not be limited to just evangelism].

The clergy-laity division. The seminary should teach that the role of the clergy is not just to run a good Sunday service, but that the Sunday services equip Christians to serve in homes, offices, and communities.

I do not see any contradiction in traditional religious teachings. On the other hand, traditional church teachings teach a dichotomy between sacred and secular work; but their impact on society at large is very small. This is changing gradually.

**East and  
Central Africa**

*[in reference to response to Question 23]*

That is why the theology of work should be spread as widely as possible.

**New Zealand**

Anything that implies work is a second best for God's people (Augustine's contemplative and active categories) is counter-productive for the workplace, both for Christians within it and for the general public in terms of teachings that have filtered down from the past. There is little teaching in our churches that work is the punishment for sin, but the workplace is often seen as a place of compromise and danger while the gathered church is clean and safe. The failure of Christians to get a good theology of work and good teaching about workplace behavior creates a poor image in society about the church and work and Christians in the workplace.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

This has primarily been the issues of prohibited work, hierarchy of occupations and emphasis on what work pays as opposed to being sent. This has negatively impacted society as believers who are supposed to be salt and light are prevented from influencing many areas of human endeavor

**Northern Europe/  
UK**

The secular-sacred divide; prosperity theology (which makes very one-sided use of parts of the Bible); anti-capitalist theology (which makes very one-sided use of other parts of the Bible) . In the UK, prosperity theology has had little impact; the other two have a significant impact.

**Slovakia/Eastern  
Europe**

Not contradictory but rather an almost complete absence of Biblical teaching on the role of work in society and Church life.

*See Next Page for Question 25*

**QUESTION 25:**

*To what degree has the theology of work moved beyond the academic institutions and into the local churches? What may need to be done here?*

**Geographic Area/Culture****Response to Question****Asia/Singapore/  
China/Hong Kong**

Very little. It is still not a priority of churches and seldom taught.

There is now a growing awareness about the theology of work in churches, but buy-in is slow. There needs to be a change of mindset of the pastors and leaders in the local church in regard to the value of work and that of ministry in the workplace.

Seminaries need to change their curriculum. Internship should not only be in churches but could go into good social enterprises or businesses run by Christians.

The theology of work is very much alive outside academic seminaries. It was pioneered by marketplace, para-church organizations. Over time seminaries got interested, and now a few of them have dedicated professors and academic programs. Still needed: depth, in terms of contextualization and theological integration.

**East and  
Central Africa**

Our focus since 2008 has been to equip the Christian church, and this has been very successful. This has enabled us to reach directly and indirectly millions of people in East and Central Africa with the theology-of-work concept. More emphasis needs to be placed on reaching out to more churches, the youth and CBOs (Community-Based Organizations).

**New Zealand**

In some regards, it has yet to even get into some of the academic institutions, there only being two courses in New Zealand at tertiary level. Many (the majority) of churches are either unaware of a good theology of work or too busy to give it prominence. The small handful of us here involved in these areas work hard to create greater awareness with seminars, articles, teaching, and a foundation for promoting awareness. However it is hard work, and after quite a few years of this, we sometimes wonder if we are making any progress. Most evangelicals are completely wrapped up in a quest for better leadership, statistical growth and the promotion of strong gathered church programs, despite all the evidence this is not working.

**North Central  
Nigeria**

It's been slow. Most of the teaching has been in non-church settings, but I believe more consultations and partnership-building will help. It might also help to get the church leaders into theology-of-work courses, as they might be more comfortable teaching their members themselves.

<b>Northern Europe/ UK</b>	It has made limited impact, though I and my organization (Faith in Business) do our best, and some organizations like the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) with more resources are making a strong effort.
<b>Slovakia/Eastern Europe</b>	Almost not at all. Theology of work is not taught in the seminaries or Bible colleges.