

News Story Summary

An article in the August 28, 2015 *Sunday Review* (*New York Times*, online) references a Gallup survey revealing that nearly 90 percent of workers were either “not engaged” with or “actively disengaged” from their jobs. Think about that: Nine out of 10 workers spend half their waking lives doing things they don’t really want to do in places they don’t particularly want to be.

Why? One possibility is that it’s just human nature to dislike work. This was the view of Adam Smith, the father of industrial capitalism, who felt that people were naturally lazy and would work only for pay. “It is the interest of every man,” he wrote in 1776 in “The Wealth of Nations,” “to live as much at his ease as he can.”

Barry Schwartz, the author of the opinion piece, disagrees with this view. He argues that people want work that is meaningful — that makes a difference to other people and thus ennobles us in at least some small way.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrase “Why we work, Barry Schwartz”)

Focus Attention

In advance, write the word WORK in large letters on an index card, and put a loop of masking tape on the back. Divide a dry erase board into two columns, labeled BEFORE THE FALL and AFTER THE FALL. Introduce today’s session by sharing the news story summary. Ask group members to give their opinion on whether they think people dislike their jobs because they “naturally dislike work” or whether they desire meaning and fulfillment in work. Allow for discussion, then comment that the key to answering this question is understanding when God gave man work to do. We know God gave Adam work in the garden. Hold up the index card you prepared. Ask, “Without looking it up in your Bible, which side of the board should we tape this card? Did God give man work to do before sin entered the world, or as a result of sin entering the world?” Explain that we will find the answer in today’s study.

Challenge

Ask group members to identify the connection between being made in God’s image and being given work. Ask: How is meaningful work a reflection of bearing the image of God? Remind group members of the news story and discuss whether people might be more satisfied in their jobs if they had a better understanding of being created in God’s image. Ask, “How will today’s Bible study change your attitude about your work this week?”