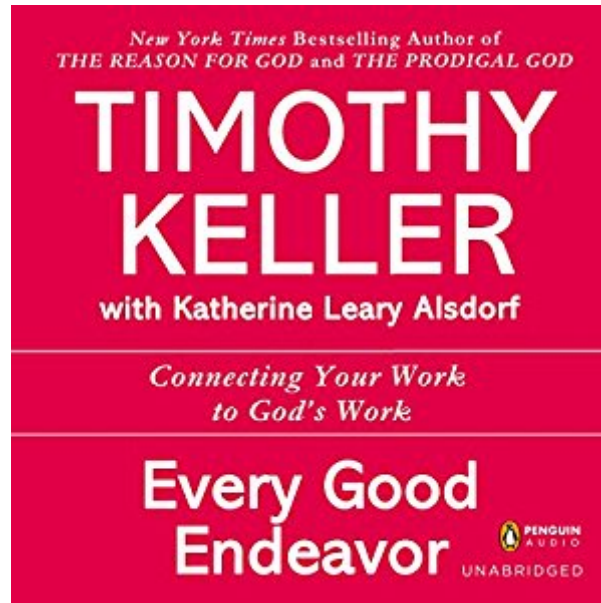


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# Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work To God's Work



## Synopsis

New York Times best-selling author Timothy Keller shows how God calls each of us to express meaning and purpose through our work and careers. In a work world that is increasingly competitive and insecure, people often have nagging questions: Why am I doing this work? Why is it so hard? And is there anything I can do about it? Tim Keller, pastor of New York's Redeemer Presbyterian Church and New York Times best-selling author of *The Reason for God*, has taught and counseled students, young professionals, and senior leaders on the subject of work and calling for more than 20 years. Now he puts his insights into a book for listeners everywhere, giving biblical perspectives on such pressing questions as: What is the purpose of work? How can I find meaning and serve customers in a cutthroat, bottom-line-oriented workplace? How can I use my skills in a vocation that has meaning and purpose? Can I stay true to my values and still advance in my field? How do I make the difficult choices that must be made in the course of a successful career? With deep insight and often surprising advice, Keller explains that biblical wisdom is immensely relevant to our questions about our work. In fact, the Christian view of work - that we work to serve others, not ourselves - can provide the foundation of a thriving professional and balanced personal life. Keller shows how excellence, integrity, discipline, creativity, and passion in the workplace can help others and even be considered acts of worship - not just of self-interest.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While others have written more scholarly defenses of the theology of vocation, *Every Good*

Endeavor is the most accessible and helpful book I've ever read on integrating a Christian perspective with our daily work----whether that work be "blue-collar" or "white-collar," physical or mental, menial or high-profile. Moreover, Keller simultaneously (and winsomely) speaks to non-Christians who are trying to make sense of the frustrations and pleasures of their work lives. Keller begins with God's plan for our work: The idea that work preceded the Fall, that work gives dignity to humankind, and that work allows us to cultivate the created order such that others are served. Keller also relates our vocation to the gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone: "First, if religious works were crucial to achieving a good standing with God, then there would always be a fundamental difference between those in church ministry and everyone else. But if religious work did absolutely nothing to earn favor with God, it could no longer be seen as superior to other forms of labor. The gospel of salvation through sheer grace holds a second implication for work....many modern people seek a kind of salvation--self-esteem and self-worth--from career success. This leads us to seek only high-paying, high-status jobs, and to 'worship' them in perverse ways. But the gospel frees us from the relentless pressure of having to prove ourselves and secure our identity through work, for we are already proven and secure." The second section of the book unpacks the many frustrations of work that the Fall made inevitable. As Christians, however, we can know that while our work in this world will always fall short, "our work in this life is not the final world." We labor in the certain hope of redemption, and of a new heavens and new earth. Keller goes on to address how to biblically steward the responsibility, authority, and power that might come from a job well done (or from being, providentially, well-connected to others in power). Finally, Keller deals with how our work lives reveal our most deeply held and pervasive idols. Different cultures have different idols. Keller gives of the main idols of three dominant cultures of Western history: traditional, modern, and postmodern. Part three is about the gospel and work. Put simply, the Christian worldview helps us make sense of our work. Keller flushes out how the gospel relates to business, journalism, higher education, the arts, and medicine. This section also includes an excellent treatment of the doctrine of common grace. Everyone, including non-Christians, ultimately does God's work in the sense that they utilize their God-given talents. And everyone has some knowledge of God's truth; even if they suppress it in unrighteousness, it inevitably bubbles up. Some non-Christians are highly moral. Keller writes: "Properly understood, the doctrine of sin means that believers are never as good as our true worldview should make us. Similarly, the doctrine of grace means that unbelievers are never as messed up as their false worldview should make them." The gospel gives Christians a "new compass" for work: we work unto the Lord, but for the good of others. This empowers us to be change-agents in our spheres, for the sake of others.

We'll have a winsome, peaceful attitude as we go about our work because we no longer "need" the work to give us meaning and worth (we got those from God). Unpacking Matt. 11:28-30, where Jesus tells us to take his yoke upon us so that we can find rest for our souls, Keller explains: "The yoke or harness put on a beast of burden was a symbol of slavery and grinding toil. How could this be a solution to the problem of deep weariness? Jesus says that it is his yoke and burden--and it is the only one that is light. Why? "For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (verse 29). He is the only boss who will not drive you into the ground, the only audience that does not need your performance in order to be satisfied with you. Why is this? Because his work for you is finished." All in all, *Every Good Endeavor* is an excellent read for anyone seeking a better understanding of how their faith can be, and should be, integrated with their work.

The Christian Scriptures give us hope for work, but work can be deeply frustrating and difficult, so the spiritual hope must be profound if we are going to face the challenge of pursuing vocation in this world, according to Timothy Keller in this book. Everyone has the experience of imagining accomplishing things but being incapable of producing them. Without God, all our best endeavours ultimately come to naught, but with God our work can be part of bringing about the future healed world. The book goes on to consider a number of aspects of work and the relationship between work and faith, including the importance of work as an indispensable component in a meaningful human life; the dignity that work gives to us as human beings, regardless of its status or pay; work as a way of cultivating creation; work as an act of worship to the God who called and equipped you to do it; problems with fruitless, pointless and selfish work; the relationship between work and idolatry; and the ways in which the Gospel changes the nature of work. I was particularly interested in the Epilogue, which describes what the author's church, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, does to help its people integrate faith and work. The church has five primary ministry areas: worship and evangelism, community formation, mercy and justice, church planting, and faith and work. Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work runs an intensive theological and leadership development program for young professionals, an entrepreneurship initiative, vocation groups, retreats and classes, literary publications, art exhibits and performances, and a range of lectures and conferences. Most Christians who find themselves in employment other than full-time church ministry face questions about how to live out their faith in the context of work, and most churches do not know how to help their people address these questions. I found this book to be a very helpful resource. I highly recommend it because it provides a range of useful ideas that churches can use to lead their people into more effective Christian engagement in the workplace.

Tim Keller has given us another excellent resource. In my 40 years of ministry I have done lots of things, one of those was operate the Job Training Program for an inner city ministry. We had a ten week Theology of Work (written by Dr. Keith Phillips) course that we took our young people through and then helped them to find good employment opportunities. Until now I have not found a book on the Theology of work that I felt did an adequate job with the subject. Keller's book handles it well, documents the Biblical principles and gives a good practical application for all that he is discussing. Do you feel as though you have a "job" or a "calling"? That is one of the questions asked by Keller. Most of the time people think of a "calling" as being something a Pastor / missionary / professional Christian worker has from God. But Keller does a great job of reminding us that God put work in place as something for all of us, and it is a "GOOD" thing. Thus we are all "called" by God to do our work in a way that pleases Him and brings honor and glory to His name. God gives each of us talent and intellect. He gives each of us a "calling" to the work that we do. As such we need to be asking other questions such as, how can I bring honor and glory to God through my daily work? How can I share God with others through my daily work? How will my attitude at work actually be a positive witness to others about my walk with God. Keller's book is wonderful. It would be a great book for small groups to read together and then discuss. I would recommend that it would even be a great book for you to read, place on your desk at work and see if it will generate discussions with co-workers about your belief that God gave us work as a "good" thing not as a punishment. I believe everyone will benefit from this book. Enjoy!

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