

Let's Reset Our Idea of Work and Vocation

Choose from one to three sessions for understanding work and vocation.

Based on your group's needs, consider adding another individual workshop or plenary from the separate speaking topics list.

1. **Work Saints and Work Martyrs: How Do We Understand The Work We Do?**

The ideal that motivates many Americans to work to the point of exhaustion is the promise that we will live a good life: not just a life of material comfort, but a life of social dignity, moral character, and spiritual purpose. But does this idea hold true in the world of Christian education? How do we balance how we teach and how much we do with the reality and culture of the work system? Having a biblical understanding of vocation, relationship, and wisdom can strengthen our perspective and rescue us from the fires of burnout.

The opening session includes an interactive discussion of what a work saint or a work martyr might be, and we consider both research and wisdom from Jonathan Malesic, Mortimer Adler, Dorothy Sayers, Amy Wrzesniewski, Os Guinness, and Solomon.

2. The second session addresses our perspective. **Work as Reliance, Response, and Rest** relies on the works of Josef Pieper, Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Where do our work ideas come from? Beginning with “the tyranny of the urgent” and a review of needs and wants, we explore how we commonly view our days and weeks. Do we act as if we know our purpose? Is it with God, Emmanuel, or not? With time for written reflection and discussion, we will wrestle with Pieper’s definitions of leisure, festivity, and work and write out a new perspective of work with a list of challenge questions to keep before us every day.
3. The third session is **Measuring Ourselves** in the workplace. How do we measure success in the classroom, in the front office, or in any setting? Beyond mentorship models, semester or end of year work evaluations are limited by their nature. They can’t truly measure us, yet we need them. Originally designed for teachers and school administrators, this workshop centers on identity, imitation, and fruitfulness. Both the apostle Paul and Clement of Alexandria provide two distinctives—one, that we have a close relationship with Christ. Two, that Christ embodies all that He has commanded because he could only do what he saw his Father doing (John 5:19; 14:24). Jesus became like us so that we could become like him. This is the imitation that matters. It follows our primary calling, and it can be every strength to a Christian school and community as we consider the fruit of our months and years.