

# *The Nature of Work as a Healthcare Professional – Is it Valuable?*

## *Genesis 1*

*(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)*

### *Thinking about life as a student in healthcare*

1. How often do you question the value of your future work as a health professional? Given that treatments inevitably fail, patient demands exceed what can be delivered and that we feel limited in what we can do, do you ever wonder, what is the point of it all?

### *What does God have to say?*

Genesis 1 records the creation of the world. It also gives us an insight into many aspects of God's character, including the fact that He is a worker. He designs, He builds, He gardens. He works so as to bring order to chaos (vs. 1-2). God is a worker, and He enjoys the product of His work; He describes His work as "very good" (vs. 31). And then He makes humans, in His image, as co-workers with Him...

Read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-17.

1. What words are used to describe the task that God gives humanity in 1:28 and 2:15?
2. What do you think it means to "subdue" the earth?
3. What do you think it means to "take care of the earth"?  
Read Psalm 104. How does the Psalmist describe God's care for the earth?
4. What is the significance of the fact we're made like God as workers, and that right from the start He tasks us to work in His creation?

Humanity is given the task of "subduing", "taking care of" and "working" the earth. The word "subdue" means to bring something under your control for a certain, useful purpose. In our work we're to take the earth and subdue it; that is, take the earth and its resources and make them useful for our own purposes.

For example, God gives us radiation and says, "Subdue it! Rule over it and get creative with it and see what you can come up with!" And in our subduing of radiation we make it useful for taking x-rays, treating cancer and so on. This is our co-working with God.

However as we subdue we're to do it in such a way that we "take care of the earth", not abusing it, exploiting it or with a disregard for it.

### *Putting it into practice*

1. How does your profession "subdue"? What opportunities are there in your profession to "subdue"?
2. How do you "take care of the earth" as you "subdue"? Think of specific examples as you consider your future work places.

Genesis 1-2 shows us God is a worker. As humans made in His image we're workers too. It's why, like God, when we complete a task we get pleasure from stepping back and admiring our handiwork, just as God did at the end of His creation work in Genesis 1:31.

This also means that when we work like Him it honours Him, in the same way it honours a parent when a child imitates them. And when we work like God in front of our colleagues who don't know Him it gives them a small taste of what He is like.

One of the ways God works is by bringing order to chaos...

3. Tim Chester writes that, "God's first creative act brought order from chaos. And that first creative act is prototypical for all creative acts". So when we bring order to chaos we "are expressing true humanity and sharing in God's joy at creation". What opportunities exist in your healthcare profession for you to imitate God by bringing order to chaos? Had you ever considered that this may reflect God to your colleagues/patients?
4. Think of the 3 most menial tasks that you may do as a healthcare professional (or as one in training!). How does an understanding of imitating God in our workplace give significance to even those tasks?
5. Tying it all together, reflect on the value of your work as a healthcare professional in God's world. It may be helpful to reconsider God's commands to humanity to:
  - a. Subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28);
  - b. Take care of the earth (Genesis 2:15); and
  - c. Work the earth (Genesis 2:15).

It is part of the very nature of work that it is valuable, by virtue of the fact that it sits squarely within God's purposes for this world.

For further reading: Tim Chester, <http://timchester.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/how-to-wash-up-to-the-glory-of-god-plus-washing-up-tips/>, cited October 2010.

# Bible Bites

(Suitable to be completed over approximately 20-25 minutes by a group or an individual)

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### Thinking about life as a student in healthcare

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### What does God have to say?

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Read Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-17:

1:26-28, <sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

<sup>27</sup>So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

2:15-17, <sup>15</sup>The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. <sup>16</sup>And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup>but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

1. What is the significance of the fact we're made like God as workers, and that right from the start He tasks us to work in His creation?

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