



Document

Faith, Work, and Economics Annotated Bibliography

An annotated sampling of resources leaders are encouraged to include in their Knowledge Building and Church Implementation grants.

General Resources

Lester DeKoster, *Work: The Meaning of Your Life* (reissued 2010)

A very short and exceptional book introducing the layperson to how Christianity can and should completely transform our perspective on everyday work, ranging from the daily experience of the line worker to the civilization-building power of human labor.

Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (2002)

Outstanding summary of how the doctrine of calling (or “vocation”) is the organizing principle of the entire Christian life. Includes applications for work and economics as well as church, family, civil responsibilities, etc.

Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God* (2003)

Excellent little book on how economic phenomena manifest the image of God. Very good introduction to the overlap of theology and economic activity.

Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling* (2012)

Provides a comprehensive theological framework connecting work, business, economics and the shalom of the entire community. Interacts with the existing theology of work literature as well as the idea of “missional church.” As with any book at this ambitious level, not everyone will agree with everything, but it is a very impressive accomplishment.

Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (2010)

In this short and powerful book, a Christian community development expert and a

Christian economist discuss the extensive damage done to communities in the developing world by well-meaning western relief efforts. Offers a new framework for thinking about helping the poor that distinguishes between three types of need – relief, rehabilitation and development.

Theological background

The NIV Stewardship Study Bible (2009)

A study Bible entirely devoted to the concept of stewardship. While today this concept is usually invoked only as a way of guilt-tripping congregants into giving money and time to the church, the biblical concept is a rich, full-rounded conceptual framework for structuring our entire lives, as stewards of God's message and of the created order.

Effective Stewardship (2009)

A video curriculum introducing the biblical concept of stewardship as it applies to all areas of life. Released in association with the Stewardship Study Bible.

David Baker, *Tight Fists or Open Hands?* (2009)

Systematic overview of all provisions in the Old Testament law dealing with economics, including analysis of both scriptural texts and their historical/cultural contexts.

Bruce Longenecker & Kelly Liebengood, eds., *Engaging Economics* (2009)

Anthology examining a variety of questions about the economic context of the New Testament, connecting New Testament texts to their historical/cultural contexts.

John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (reissued 2008)

The opening chapter on the mission of the church is a great introduction to the complex problem of relating non-church work to evangelism.

On work

Tom Nelson, *Work Matters* (2011)

A good introduction to the spiritual significance of work in everyday life.

William Placher (ed.), *Callings* (2005)

Collected readings on the idea of "calling" from the last two thousand years. An excellent way to get up to speed on the history of this idea in the Christian mind, and a great resource.

Michael Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth* (2004)

Outlines the goodness of the material world and its implications for the Christian life. Similar to Cosden (below) but with broader appeal and less heavily eschatological.

Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (2006)

A distinctive perspective on the biblical significance of work, with an eschatological focus.

David Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (2006)

Outlines and analyzes various Christian efforts to develop a biblical perspective on work in the 20th century. Very influential and useful, although Miller's four-point rubric for analyzing the theology of work reflects some limitations arising from the uneven quality of the work he is surveying.

Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit* (2001)

Volf attempts a comprehensive theology of work and economics. Some pieces are valuable, such as his emphasis on the role of the Spirit in equipping us for work. However, Volf's uncritical assimilation of dehumanizing economic and political theories taints his analysis. His view of work is subjective and egocentric, and his economic theory subordinates individuals, businesses and communities to unlimited political control.

R. Paul Stevens, *Seven Days of Faith* (2001)

The chapter on work is a good introduction to why this subject matters so much.

William Diehl, *The Monday Connection* (1992)

A businessperson's report from the front lines on the difference a theological perspective makes, and why churches need to provide it.

On business

Kenman Wong & Scott Rae, *Business for the Common Good* (2011)

Offers a framework for integrating faith and business life, including the orientation of business activity towards its proper end: productive contribution to the common good of the community.

Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling* (1996)

Introduces the non-business reader to what the life of a business leader is like, considered from a theological perspective.

Acton Institute, *The Call of the Entrepreneur* (2007)

A video on business leadership from a Christian perspective.

Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God* (2011)

Connects business life both to a theological framework and Niebuhr's famous five-point typology of models for integrating Christ and culture.

On economics

Victor Claar & Robin Klay, *Economics in Christian Perspective* (2007)

Two Christian economists offer the layperson a step-by-step introduction to the field of economics, as seen through the lens of theological concerns. A terrific introduction to how dialogue between theology and economics looks from the economic side.

Samuel Gregg, *Economic Thinking for the Theologically Minded* (2001)

Short introduction to the basic concepts of technical economic analysis (supply and demand, marginal utility, opportunity cost, etc.) for lay readers, with attention to questions raised by theology.

Alex Pollock, *Boom and Bust* (2010) and **Philip Levy & Claude Barfield**, *Swap* (2011)

These short books focus on some of the basic macro-structures of an economy (Pollock on financial markets, Levy and Barfield on trade) with particular attention to the pressing moral questions of our time. Pollock argues that financial booms and busts occur because human nature is morally flawed – when asset prices rise, some will inevitably behave irresponsibly. Levy and Barfield present a defense of trade as a preferable way for wealthier nations to promote the well-being of all.

Austin Hill & Scott Rae, *The Virtues of Capitalism* (2010)

Shows how economic activity is necessary to form critical virtues such as honesty, diligence, and concern for others' needs. Includes discussion of the larger social structures necessary to facilitate this virtue-forming dynamic.

Jay Richards, *Money, Greed and God* (2009)

Richards argues against seven common “myths” or inadequate approaches to

economics among Christians. He relates how he used to believe in these myths himself but came to be convinced that they were false. The common thread of the book is that the social system of economic activity is intrinsically good, despite the moral failures that disrupt it.

Alex Brill & Alan Viard, *The Real Tax Burden* (2011) and **Andrew Biggs**, *Social Security* (2011)

These two short books examine the relationship between savings and consumption in the context of tax policy (Brill & Viard) and pension policy (Biggs). Both argue that policies encouraging citizens to channel more of their assets toward savings rather than consumption are more beneficial to individuals and to the economy as a whole.

Shawn Ritenour, *Foundations of Economics: A Christian View* (2010)

Extensive introductory text on economic analysis written for a Christian audience. The approach to economics is distinctively and strongly of the Austrian school. The opening and closing chapters provide a useful theological context by grounding economics in the cultural mandate, but otherwise there is little attempt to address overlap between economics and theology, and such attempts as are made are superficial and unsatisfying. This is basically a standard undergraduate textbook in Austrian economics, sandwiched between two chapters on theology.

Stephen Grabill, ed., *Sourcebook in Late-Scholastic Monetary Theory* (2007)

Original source texts (1556-1609) from three authors developing monetary theory in the scholastic tradition. Mainly of interest for the introduction, which provides a thorough and eye-opening review of how economics as a field of inquiry began among medieval theologians, and why the intersection of theology and economics still matters.

Ian Harper & Samuel Gregg, eds., *Christian Theology and Market Economics* (2008)

On poverty

Robert Lupton, *Toxic Charity* (2011)

In this powerful and convicting book, an urban ministry leader provides a front-line examination of why so much ministry to the poor in American churches does more harm than good. Lupton exposes shallow approaches based on materialistic thinking that strip the poor of their human dignity, and outlines what is needed to craft a genuinely helpful response to poverty.

Lawrence Mead, *From Prophecy to Charity* (2011)

A short book marshaling history, social science and religious perspectives on social and policy questions connected to poverty. Argues that the key conflict is not between governmental versus non-governmental approaches, but between approaches that foster dependency and those that foster self-support through work – and that non-monetary cultural influences, rather than the flow of dollars in either governmental or non-governmental programs, is the key determinant between work and non-work.

Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital* (2003)

Based on extensive data-gathering in developing countries and research on the economic development of America in the 19th century, de Soto shows how economic flourishing requires not just pro-development policy at the top of society but a deep, pervasive set of social structures in which everyone's property and businesses (especially those of the poor) are protected from theft and abuse. De Soto is naïve about the role of culture, but his insight on the role of other social structures is invaluable. The book is about economics but is accessible to the non-economist.

Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (reissued 2008)

Documents how in the 20th century the holistic model of care for the poor, rooted in historic Christian teaching, was replaced (both in the church and in society at large) with a handout- only model that creates a debilitating dependency.

Other issues

Jennifer Roback Morse, *Love and Economics* (updated 2008)

A Christian economist offers an extensive argument, with supporting data, for why a flourishing economy requires, and cannot by itself produce, strong traditional families.

Steven Hayward, *Mere Environmentalism* (2010)

A brief outline of the distinctive biblical perspective on humanity and the environment, including applications for current issues. In opposition to the prevailing view that human impact on the environment is intrinsically bad and must be minimized, Hayward shows that the Bible depicts human beings as having been created for the purpose of impacting the environment – transforming the wilderness outside Eden into a developed world. The solution to bad impact on the environment is not less impact, but good impact.

Kenneth Green, *Abundant Energy: The Fuel of Human Flourishing* (2011)

This short book provides an economic overview of the various ways in which the production of human flourishing in all its forms requires the consumption of energy.

Economics & Society

Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason* (2006)

Traces the history of capitalism from its emergence in the 12th century through its development into modernity. Stark demonstrates how capitalism arose from Christian commitments to the dignity of the individual person, and the power of image-bearing human beings to produce economic growth through their work.

Peter Wehner & Arthur Brooks, *Wealth and Justice* (2010)

A short statement of the moral basis of “democratic capitalism” as a social system. The authors argue that the model is ultimately based on the view that human nature is both good and bad, over against romantic optimism and cynical pessimism, both of which end in dehumanizing social systems. They pay particular attention to the question of justice for the poor. The book also addresses the limitations of the social model.

Os Guinness, *The Call* (2003)

A very good layperson’s introduction to the doctrine of calling and its implications for society, in history and today.

Samuel Gregg, *The Commercial Society* (2007)

Historical overview of the emergence of “the commercial society” – especially as manifested in the contrasts observed by Tocqueville between American democracy and the aristocratic systems of Europe – and reflections on the challenges facing this social model in the contemporary world.

Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1990)

In response to radical challenges such as liberation theology, Novak constructs a comprehensive theological/philosophical defense of “democratic capitalism” as a social system.