PRAISE FOR *REDEEMING THE WORKPLACE*

"In *Redeeming the Workplace*, Matthew Warner recovers a truth we've forgotten: Work is not just what we do but how we are transformed. This wonderful book is a powerful guide to turning ordinary jobs into extraordinary paths to holiness."

—**Arthur C. Brooks**, #1 New York Times best-selling author of *The Meaning of Your Life*

"Matthew Warner has written an immensely practical, readable, and most important of all, essential call to holiness for all people who work. He's made it both compelling and simple. What a combination!"

—**Patrick Lencioni**, author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, *The Ideal Team Player,* and *The Advantage*

"The knee-jerk criticism of distributism is that even though it might sound good, it's impossible. It can't be done. Matthew Warner not only shows that it can be done, but how to do it. And he demonstrates plainly and potently that distributism is localism."

—**Dale Ahlquist**, president of the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton and editor of *The Everlasting Man: A Guide to G. K. Chesterton's Masterpiece*

"My parish uses Flocknote, so I enjoyed this book's behind-the-scenes insights into the values and operations of this successful enterprise. But Matthew Warner's book offers far more: He draws deeply from the Catholic tradition to show how corporate founders and senior leaders can put their beliefs and spirituality front and center as they create their companies."

—**Chris Lowney**, author of *Heroic Leadership*

"This book came at a time when I was pretty worn down from work, and honestly, it hit me in a way I didn't expect. There are a lot of books out there about productivity and leadership, but this gets at something deeper, the *why* behind all of it. It challenged the way I think about work, ownership, and especially rest—not in a weird or abstract way but in a way that actually connects to real life. You can tell it's rooted in Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, but it's also very practical. It doesn't just stay in ideas; it pushes you to look at your life and how you're actually living. If you're feeling stretched thin or trying to figure out how your work fits into a bigger picture, I'd definitely recommend it."

—**Rob Kaczmark**, founder and CEO of Spirit Juice Studios

REDEEMING *the* WORKPLACE

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8 Beliefs That Transform the Way We Work

Matthen Warner

Word on Fire

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Introduction

My gut clenched. What was I thinking? I'd just hit send on a very carefully crafted email, BCC'ing every friend, coworker, and acquaintance I could think of. The instant it went out, I wished I could take it back.

It was a pitch for a health drink venture—a new "business opportunity." I'd been invited to join, and now I was supposed to recruit others under me. It promised freedom and financial "independence." It was exciting. It was new. It felt entrepreneurial. It all of a sudden felt . . . wrong. I didn't care about health drinks or know anything about sales. And now I was impersonally asking everyone I knew to join something I didn't even believe in myself.

I really just wanted out of the corporate grind. I wanted to make some money. I wanted to "work for myself" and build something I could call my own. What I wanted was good. I just didn't know how to get it. I was going about it all wrong.

DREAMS

When I was a kid and somebody would ask, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I'd say, "A baseball player!"

What was your answer? Do you remember?

Have you achieved it?

Most of us don't achieve our childhood dreams, but that's good. The world needs more than baseball players, ballerinas, and astronauts. What's not good, however, is that those childhood dreams seldom get replaced with better dreams. We give up. We stop dreaming. We forget. We settle for something less. Time ticks by—little league, algebra, puberty, graduation—and all of a sudden there's no more time for dreaming. Now . . . it's time to "go to work." This book is about that work.

GOING TO WORK

My first job after college, by most standards, was a great one. It was a large company with rewarding work, good people, and opportunities for advancement. I learned a lot. I had hoped to climb the ladder there and make a career out of it.

But one day, I looked around at the most successful leaders and realized: I don't want any of their jobs. They were there early every day and late every night. They answered emails at midnight and on the weekend. They spent their days battling bureaucracy, politics, red tape, canceled programs, corporate mandates, disengaged workers, and various other personnel issues. That was the

job, and they were good at it. I admired their work ethic and skill. And I was ready to work hard and give my all at something too. But was this it?

During that time, I spent the better part of most days toiling alongside good people, working shoulder to shoulder doing hard things together. We had fun and cared about each other. My coworkers became my friends. It felt good. But then, inevitably, some head-scratching big decision from higher up, some eye-rolling HR policy, or some overly formulaic performance review would come along and expose the scaffolding. Just beyond the experience of my friendly human coworkers, I was a number in a corporate system—just another part serving the Great Machine. And it was a machine driven not by truth or goodness but by politics, quotas, and bottom lines. The people were great, but the system was flawed to the core.

When I spoke to other people about their own workplaces, the stories were even worse. Every few years, new ownership would take over, upend everything, restructure the org chart, do a round of layoffs, and then ask those left to do even more with even less. Their workplaces were perpetually plagued by high turnover, short-term thinking, self-interest all around, and a lack of stability. Workers were burned out, disenchanted, suspicious of the "people at the top," and ready to jump ship at the next slightly better opportunity that came along. At the time, I didn't know any better. It seemed like maybe this was *just how work is*.

Yet despite all that, human work has managed to produce

splendid things—like space travel, lifesaving medical technology, and Yeti tumblers that keep your drink inexplicably ice-cold. The modern economy has lifted over half the world out of abject poverty and is rapidly doing the same for the rest. It's incredible. On the other hand, while we were making all that "progress," more important things have gone backward—like marriages, happiness, free time, rest, total health, tradition, the passing on of the faith, serving neighbors, building community, local economies, development of character, and lasting personal peace. Was this just a coincidence?

How we work changes everything. It's a massive part of human life. *Some form of work will occupy most of the hours of most of your days for most of your life*. How you spend that time will change you into a particular kind of person and build a particular kind of world. Mae West said, "You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough." I think of that quote often. Once is enough, but it's *only* enough if I "do it right." I was beginning to think I wasn't doing it right.

WHAT TO DO? NO IDEA.

That's when I sent the embarrassing "health drink" email. I regretted it then, but I am grateful for it now. I was just desperate for something different. While that idea immediately fizzled, the experience opened my imagination to a very different kind of future. It got me asking questions, which was good. But unfortunately, I had

started with the wrong questions: *How do I make money? How do I run my own business? How do I free myself from a broken system?* I was trying to solve my own short-term problems and kept coming up short.

Around that same time, my faith was growing in leaps and bounds. I'd recently gotten more involved at church and I started asking more important questions—like *Why do I believe all this stuff? What is my purpose in life? What's all this for?* The answers I received from the Church blew me away. I'd come upon a deep cavern overflowing with treasure, and I would never be the same. I caught fire, getting even more involved and plowing through book after book about my faith.

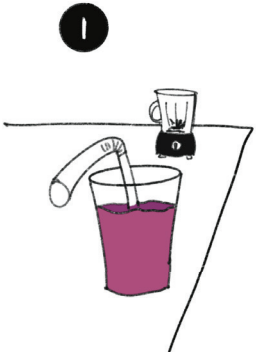
Along the way, I discovered thousands of years of beautiful, simple, challenging teachings about work. And I don't just mean wisdom on how to be a good Christian at work or moral guidance on what kinds of work we should do. I mean deep, structural truths about human work—things they didn't teach in business school. I learned about principles with profound implications for how we work and the workplaces we create—principles like sin and redemption, human dignity, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, care for creation, rights and responsibilities, a preference for the poor and vulnerable, and the universal destination of goods.

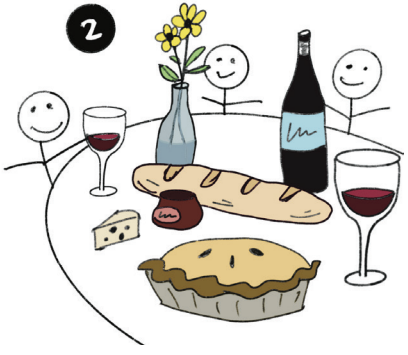
These weren't just ideas for Sunday worship or family life. They were fundamentals of how to structure and manage all of society—especially how we work. The places I'd worked before

had never really mentioned any of these things. Why not? Was it not allowed? Did they not know them? Had newer ways of working eclipsed the older wisdom? What *did* the modern workplace believe about work anyway? And what core beliefs about work had shaped it into whatever it had become? I'm not sure we knew.

CORE BELIEFS CHANGE EVERYTHING

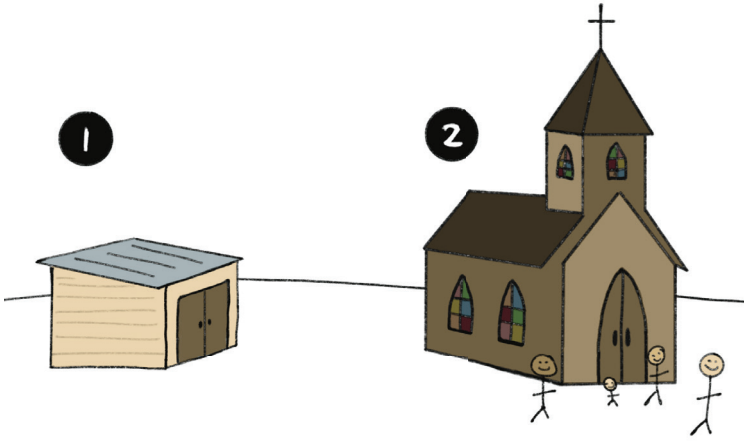
Consider two chefs. Both are given the same ingredients to prepare a meal. But each chef believes something very different about the purpose of the meal. Chef #1 believes the meal is for fuel and energy. Chef #2 believes the meal is about human connection and celebrating a great feast. Even with the same ingredients, they'll end up with two very different results and ways of getting there.





The outcome depends less upon the ingredients, techniques, or tools, and more profoundly upon that foundational belief about the activity itself: *What do I believe this is really for?* Change that belief, and everything else follows naturally.

Or consider two builders. Both are given the same materials, but again, each believes something different about the purpose of those materials. Builder #1 believes it's for shelter. Builder #2 believes it's for gathering together to worship. Same materials—two very different results and ways of getting there.



Foundational beliefs change everything and determine the most important parts of whatever we're doing: *What's it for? How should it work? What defines success? How should we get there? Is this a bug or a feature?* Core beliefs change everything. It's the same for