Since the last decade of the 1800’s theologians have endeavored to offer theological reflections on the dynamics of human work. These studies have produced an array of studies from biblical scholars, philosophers and systematic theologians that have illuminated the biblical understandings of work and philosophical analysis of the economic and social changes on work in Western societies brought about by the Industrial Revolution. No theology of work extant has been developed which incorporates empirical research into contemporary experiences of workers.

In order to take the theology of work conversation forward, “Shaping the Lenses on Everyday Work: A Neo-Calvinist Understanding of the Poetics of Work and Vocational Discipleship” uses an interdisciplinary methodology that incorporates methods from qualitative research to explore the lived realities of contemporary Christians in their work and church contexts. The first third of the dissertation provides an historical analysis of the early theologies of work written by Pope Leo XIII and Herman Bavinck as well as critical reflection on the leading contemporary theologies of work. These historical and literary analyses outline the necessary methodological and theological issues that must be addressed in a theology of work for the twenty-first century.

The guiding theological framework of human work of this dissertation is a biblical theology of the missio Dei, the mission of God. This theological framework is used to interpret the ethnographic research conducted in three congregations. A concluding chapter draws several conclusions for constructing a theology of work for congregations as well as suggestions for how to cultivate a theological imagination for everyday work in Christians.