
Life's Work

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Review

We want to see our work and labor matter, and they only matter within the context of the biblical story and discipleship to Jesus. Work is not an outcome from the Fall of Man. Work is a part of God's design for His world and His image-bearing creatures. In review:

God's **design** for work is turning the "wild and waste" into "order and beauty."

God's ultimate vision of work is for **sharing**, not just **survival**.

Work is where humans exercise **moral judgment**, which requires **wisdom**

The **environment** of work is made more difficult by sin

"Before the Fall, mankind were gardeners, after the Fall mankind became farmers." Our "labor" becomes "toil," and the fruit of our labors come from the sweat of our brow.

We work **for Jesus** and for the Inheritance in Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in **the work of the Lord**, knowing that **in the Lord your labor is not in vain**.

Colossians 3:23-24 (ESV) Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Introduction

Our work for the Lord is not just "church and non-profit" work, but any work we engage in that we view Jesus as the one we work for. Our labor in Christ is not in vain. So how do we rethink our jobs in the light of Christ and this biblical story? We first have to see Jesus as the complete center of our whole lives. This is what discipleship means.

Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV) "Come to me, all who **labor** and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly

in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

How do we know if we are doing work that is working for Jesus? Jesus recognizes that work and life is difficult. “Look at me and I will show you a better way, give you a new perspective. I am the answer and redemption of work, the center of WHY we work.”

We live in an age of radical (and extreme) individualism where we have redefined work with “self” at the center. We have been conditioned by the culture of the world to a very self-centered and isolated perspective about life in general, and work in specific.

There are two polarized effects of this self-centered and isolated perspective: 1. A “workaholic” who worships work as the means to get what they want (more); or 2. A “sluggard” who’s desire is to work as little as possible in order to be as free as possible. Both sides still have “self” (my wants, my needs, my desires) at the center. Neither “self” nor our work should be the center of our lives, Christ should hold that position for us. But work is still a Biblical command as well as a gift. So though it should not be at the center of our lives, it should constitute part of the circumference. We work for God’s glory as His covenant partners, and as an expression of being a true human, the image bearing creatures we are.

Does Scripture give us a way to define what work (in Christ) is?

Scripture Criteria for Work

1. Does it **PROVIDE**? (The **NECESSITY** of our work)

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 (ESV) For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is **not willing to work**, let him **not eat**. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we **command** and **encourage** in the Lord Jesus Christ to **do their work quietly** and to **earn their own living**.

Paul commands those in the church to work in such a way that it provides. He even goes so far as to say that if you are unwilling to work, you should not eat. He is not referring here to those who are not ABLE to work, but those who are able to work, yet are unwilling. Being an able mind and bodied person who chooses not to work, yet is free-loading on other people’s work to provide is against scriptural mandate.

The most dignified reality of work is the strenuous exertion to secure the goods necessary for living. It should be hard and something we give ourselves to. We might not think of work primarily as what provides for our existence, but what satisfies our inmost being.

Example: pursuing personal dreams at others’ expense (Hobby vs Work)

Proverbs 26:14 (ESV) *As a door swings back and forth on its hinges, so the lazy person turns over in bed.*

Freedom does not lie in not having to work, but in being and doing what God created you to be and do.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (NLT) Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and **working with your hands**, just as we instructed you before. Then people who are not believers will **respect the way you live**, and **you will not need to depend on others**.

The first criteria for work is directly connected to the petition in the Lord's Prayer - "give us this day our daily bread." How does God provide our sustenance? Does He drop bread from heaven? Mostly how God provides for us is by making us able (mind and body) to work to provide food for ourselves and those within our care. Sometimes this can mean miraculous provision, especially if you are not able to work. As a community of faith, we are called to provide for even more than ourselves, but take care of those who are unable to work. The prayer moves us out of our self-centeredness, into God's purposes and actions and how those reshape how we live and how we work.

Example: Story of Noah — God says he will save him, but commanded Noah to build an ark — this is covenant partnership