

Next Steps – How to VIEW and DO Your Work!

5/26/19 – Pastor Randy

Since Easter we have been focusing on God's-ordained purpose for us "in the now"; the time between Jesus death-resurrection-ascension and His second coming, or our home going. Last week we began to focus on the fact that God both created us for good works and saved us for good works. In all of our work - secular work, church work, and domestic work - we must work as agents of reconciliation between God and man; between God's will and the will of sinful men inspired by spiritual forces of darkness.

Following Jesus ought to influence:

1. **How we view** our "work"
2. **How we do** our "work"

Work is part of God's good creation. (Genesis 1-2)

Premise #1: God is a "worker" (2:2-3)

Premise #2: We are created in the image of God (1:26-27)

Premise #3: Work was ordained by God before the "Fall".

Conclusion: We were created to WORK! (1:28; 2:5,15)

Work is part of God's good creation. God ordained that we would work PRIOR to the fall. Work, like every other part of life was corrupted by the fall, but work itself is not a "necessary evil". Rather, it is a godly activity.

Last week I shared John Stott's definition of "Work".

"Work is the expenditure of energy (manual and/or mental) in the service of others, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community, and glory to God." - J. Stott, *Involvement Vol. 2*, pg. 31

We were created for work; created to expend mental and physical energy in a manner that constructs physical and social environments in a manner that contributes to the well-being of persons and to the glory of God. As we work- making a constructive contribution to the good of others and the glory of God -God works in us, conforming us into the image of Christ **through our labors of love. We can sum this up by saying that God-ordained work is a means of loving God and neighbor; thus fulfilling the two great commandments!**

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Employment is not to be confused with our call to work. You can be employed and not be involved in labor of love. You can be employed without being engaged in labor and you can be employed without expressing love.

I. Work is a Sacred Responsibility

In Paul's letters we find three basic reasons why work is a responsibility. In 1 Thess. 4:11,12; 2 Thess. 3:6-12 Paul urges Christians to work in order

A. To provide for your own needs so you will not need to depend on others.

In his first letter to Timothy he tells us that we must work:

B. To provide for your family.

1 Timothy 5:8 - *But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* What I find especially encouraging about this verse is that in its context Paul was not instructing Christians to provide for their children. He was telling adult children that they needed to provide for their moms who were widowed. If you don't work to help take care of your parents, you are an apostate.

In the letter to the Christians at Ephesus we are told to work

C. To provide for those who can't provide for themselves.

Ephesians 4:28 *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.* This is a powerful statement. When Paul calls thieves to repent, he doesn't call them to merely cease and desist from stealing. Repentance for the thief entails the end to one behavior; stealing, and the start of a new one; work.

II. Work is a Sacred Opportunity

A sacred opportunity to join with Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, in His work of reconciling all things to God. This opportunity has three aspects:

A. An opportunity to develop your character.

The attitude that says, "I will only perform work that fits my skill-set, passions and personality" will stunt that person's maturity. Sometimes...

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You have to be willing to do what you don't like to do; what you are not gifted to do; and called to do. I was not called and gifted to wash my bathroom and make my bed. My first job was delivering the NY Daily News. My next job was flipping burgers. Then I went from that job to working as a janitor at P.S. 21. Later I worked as a janitor at PS 154. I never said, "Why should I, a child of the King, servant of the Most High, have to do this kind of work." If menial tasks are beneath you, you will never mature to handle jobs which require a greater level of responsibility, skill, and expertise. Paul worked as a tentmaker. This wasn't Paul's primary calling or mission but it was something God wanted him to do in order to contribute to the needs of others.

It is an awesome blessing when you have the opportunity to earn a living performing job that makes use of your creative and intellectual gifts and people skills. But every job has aspects to it which are not enjoyable.

B. An opportunity to develop your skills. (Technical and People skills)

We have often defined discipleship too narrowly in terms of bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and witness?

God calls people to church-related work (Samuel/Ezra/Paul/Barnabas) as well as to work which is not church-related (i.e Joseph, David, Daniel, Nehemiah). Luke was a physician, and a historian. He never preached as far as we know, but he was led by the Holy Spirit to write a two-volume history of the life of Jesus and the early church.

Nehemiah and Ezra are a great example of the way God calls and uses some people in the secular realm and others in the religious realm. Nehemiah was called by God to be a construction manager to rebuild the walls of the city. When the walls were rebuilt, Ezra preached the word. Both led to revival.

C. An opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with people.

Work is one means by which Jesus sends us out into the world to connect and engage with both believers and unbelievers, living as His agents of reconciliation. About 10 years ago I worked as a substitute teacher now and then so I could have the opportunity to connect with adults and students in

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the community. I had numerous opportunities to share my faith non-Christian faculty members and to build the faith of some who were Christians. I also had the opportunity to share my faith in subtle ways with students. A few years after I left the area one student, now a young lady, contacted me on Facebook to share with me that she had become a Christian and to thank me for my influence in her life. I am jealous of those of you who work in secular workplaces because of the opportunities you have to share your faith with non-Christians.

An understanding of the sacred responsibility and opportunity of work will direct us to the kind of work we should do. Christians, acting as God's agents of reconciliation will work to provide **valuable goods and services** which construct and contribute to God's Kingdom, rather than destruct and diminish His kingdom. Remember, this applies to non-compensated work as well.

Once we have the proper **VIEW of work** (biblical perspective of work) we can move on to the subject of how we **DO our work**. We have dealt with some perspective questions. Now we need to deal with some pragmatic issues.

B. How we DO our Work

1. Diligently

In Colossians 1 Paul gave the following instructions: "And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus" and "Work willingly (from your soul) at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."

There is a character in the book of Proverbs who is viewed in a tragic, yet comic manner. He is the sluggard and he is contrasted with the ant, the model for us of diligence and hard work.

Characteristics of the SLUGGARD/LAZY:

He lacks initiative, and habitually procrastinates (Proverbs 6:6-11). He fails to complete projects/assignments. (Prov. 12:27; 19:24) He makes excuses for his laziness (Prov. 22:13) He has an aversion to discomfort. (Prov. 20:4)

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The consequences of these poor work habits are that His laziness leads to destruction (Prov. 18:9; 21:25). He is an irritation to those who depend on him, and He becomes entangled in all kinds of problems. (Prov. 15:19)

Solomon, the likely author of Prov. 6 tells the sluggard to learn from the ant. Ants are self-motivated, take initiative, finish the job, and are wise enough to plan. Here are other characteristics of the diligent worker:

He arrives to work on time and prepared. He doesn't cut corners, doesn't do the bare minimum, and goes the second mile. He does his best regardless of the effort of his co-workers.

2. Integrity and Honesty

Charlie Still Sr. and I had a conversation about work last week. He said he often has customers come in to his auto repair shop saying, "I know you are going to rip me off." They are expecting to get ripped off!! Many people expect the worst of business people.

The Economic Policy Institute reported in 2014 that survey evidence suggests wage theft costs US workers billions of dollars a year. On the other hand, research reveals a pervasive problem of employee theft as well. A 2017 CNBC online article stated that employee theft costs US businesses \$50 Billion annually.

David Callahan, bestselling author of *The Cheating Culture* documents extensively the pervasiveness of cheating in every aspect of life; from the boardroom, to classroom, to locker room.

In chapter 6 of the book of Daniel we learn that Daniel had distinguished himself **above** the other officials. Because of his superior gifts, abilities, and character the King decided to elevate him to a place of great prominence and power within his administration. Not surprisingly, his peers became jealous of him. A foreigner, an outsider, was being elevated above them. They didn't like someone they considered inferior to them being treated as if he was superior to them. Then we are told that they began to spy on Daniel to try and find some dirt on him for which they could accuse him. Listen to this powerful

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testimony to Daniel's integrity: His accusers "kept trying to find a charge against Daniel regarding the kingdom. But they could find no charge or corruption, for he was trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him." When they couldn't find any actual moral failure on his part they decided to make his faithfulness to God a cause of accusation. In order to do this, they had to pervert the law, representing righteousness as if it was evil. His principles, rather than pragmatic concerns, directed his decisions and he ended up charged with a capital offense.

No one can steal your integrity from you; it can only be surrendered by you! People can engage in defamation of your character, but they can't destroy your character. People can affect your reputation but not your integrity.

Our work in the world provides us with an opportunity to share with others what Jesus came to do for them, but it is also an opportunity to share what Jesus has done in us by performing our work diligently and ethically. If we can't show them what he has done for us, we won't have the credibility to share what he can do for them. When we do our work diligently, to the best of our ability, and when we work with integrity two things happen:

1. Your diligence and integrity are modeled, having a transforming influence on the culture of your workplace.
2. Increase your credibility as a witness to the reality of Jesus Christ as Savior!

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