

A Biblical View of Work

#3 in Series – *Proverbs: Wisdom for the Ages and Now*

Pro. 6:6-11 (NASB)

⁶Go to the ant, O sluggard,

Observe her ways and be wise,

⁷Which, having no chief,

Officer or ruler,

⁸Prepares her food in the summer

And gathers her provision in the harvest.

⁹How long will you lie down, O sluggard?

When will you arise from your sleep?

¹⁰“A little sleep, a little slumber,

A little folding of the hands to rest”—

¹¹Your poverty will come in like a vagabond (*Lit one who walks*)

And your need like an armed man.

Proverbs 16:3 (NASB)

Commit your works to the LORD

And your plans will be established.

Last week the message had to do with the sexual perversion of craving what is forbidden – specifically as it is manifested in adultery... Yet, I would dare say that for many, today’s subject is even more undesirable to talk about – because for many – WORK is a dirty word...

There is an old story that comes out of the Middle Ages that tells about the construction of Europe’s great cathedrals... A nobleman visited the construction site and was walking among the workers – asking them about their jobs... The stonemason explained the care that was involved in raising a wall that was plumb... The glass worker pointed out the intricate details of a leaded glass window... The carpenter talked about the wood framing which provided the support for the whole building... Finally, the nobleman spotted a simple peasant woman with a broom and a bucket cleaning up the trash. He asked her what she was doing... She said – “*I’m building a cathedral for the glory of God!*”... This woman had a clear understanding of the Biblical view of work...

What ever happened to that attitude among Christians today? Why is it, that the idea of work has become such a dreaded concept in our day?... You hear about Wednesday being referred to as “*Humpday*” – because you are then on the “downhill” slide to the upcoming weekend – when you are off work... There are songs about how Friday night is for partying – to celebrate getting off work... And Mondays become the dreaded day of the week – because it’s “back to work”...

We need to be reminded that work did not come to us as a consequence of the fall... Even before their rebellion against God, Adam and Eve were given the responsibility and privilege of caring for the garden:

Gen. 2:15 (NASB) “Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”

Work was not given to us as a means of punishment...

So – why would God give us work in the first place?...

There are several Biblical principles concerning work that we need to consider today – and instead of camping out in one particular passage – today’s message is more thematic.

Let’s begin by considering the fact that –

1. Work is a Gift

It is a gift from God...

As we saw in Gen. 2:15 – since the very beginning, work has been part of God’s plan for humanity... He created work – and everything God created in the beginning was GOOD!

That means you and I can view the act of working as a gift – even when there are times you don’t even like your job...

Eccl. 5:19 (NASB) “Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”

We should always acknowledge that work is a gift from God... He is the One Who equips us with the unique gifts, talents, and skills we each need to fulfill the purposes He has in store for us in our work...

God calls us to particular roles and activities – and although the roles may seem to have differences in importance – our callings to serve the Lord in those roles are equal. There are no second-class callings from God.

2. Work is a Responsibility

Those who are able to work – should do so...

The Old and New Testaments both – present the concept of work in positive terms... The Bible has a high view of work and condemns laziness...

The Apostle Paul seemed to be scolding some Christians who refused to earn their way –

2 Thess. 3:10-12 (NASB)

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. ¹¹ For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

It's important to note that this passage is not speaking to people who couldn't find jobs... This is addressing people who have every opportunity to work – but simply refuse to do so!

There is a growing movement in our nation today that wants to embrace the political system known as socialism... It is a philosophical and political system that has destroyed many nations and is contrary to what God says in His Word for how an individual or a nation should go about meeting their financial needs...

No one I know has ever clarified the dangers of socialism so precisely and succinctly as did Adrian Rogers –

Adrian Rogers – “Friend, you cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom. And what one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government can’t give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody. And when half of the people get the idea they don’t have to work because the other half’s going to take care of them, and when the other half get the idea it does no good to work because somebody’s going to get what I work for. That, dear friend, is about the end of any nation.”

Our focal passage in Proverbs ([Pro. 6:6-11](#)) is certainly an appeal for one to get off the couch and go to work!... If you are able – it’s your responsibility!

3. Work Needs Balance

The 4th commandment says –

Exo. 20:8-10 (NASB)

⁸“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.”

Even though we live in a culture that ignores this commandment – wisdom says this is still important...

Just as God created work – He also created rest... God never meant for His people to be workaholics...

All-too-often, the motivation for someone working every waking hour – is not because of their desperate financial situation – which may come at times in our lives and requires one to work harder and longer hours for awhile in order to meet those needs... But – there are those who are motivated to work all the time they can – because that is where they get their identity... Their work has become their passion, because that is what and who they see themselves to be...

Hugh Whelchel – Executive Director of the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics – he is also a contributor to The Gospel Coalition, and author of How Then Should We Work? Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Work. – wrote this – “There is a tension in the scriptures regarding work. For the Christian, life without work is meaningless, but work must never become the meaning of one’s life. Our identity is in Christ, not our work. Our union with (H)im transforms our hearts and gives us the desire to serve (H)im out of gratitude while we engage the world through our work.”

We were created for God. And we will discover our greatest sense of purpose, meaning and fulfillment when – and only when – we come into a right relationship with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ!... When we become followers of Christ – His glory becomes our passion!... We desire that He be glorified in every area of our lives – including our work...

4. Work is a Blessing

➤ To Ourselves

I like the way the ESV translates – Isa. 65:22d-23a (ESV)

²² ... my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³ They shall not labor in vain...”

And again –

Eccl. 5:19 (NASB) “Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”

There should be joy in our work... God is a God Who blesses – and we are most blessed in our work when we are doing those things for which He has equipped us and we are doing something that honors Him!

➤ For Others

In the context of rehabilitating the thief, Paul said –

Eph. 4:28 (NASB) “He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.”

Christians are to be givers – not takers!...

Jesus – Whom we follow – said that there awaits a great sense of purpose and fulfillment for those who learn the joy of being a giver... Is that not what He means when He was quoted by Paul in Acts 20:35 ? “... remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Again – **Hugh Whelchel** – “(W)e must realize the purpose of our work is to have an impact on our culture. A prominent metaphor in the Bible is the bringing of light into a dark world (Matt. 5:16; John 1:5). When light is brought into a dark room, the room is transformed. The light of the gospel has the power to transform individual people and their culture as a whole. When Christians do their jobs with excellence and with accountability, in a distinctively Christian manner, they cannot help but have a profound effect on the world around them.”

If we have that kind of impact – our work will be a true blessing to others!

5. Christians Work for God

The Apostle Paul said –

Col. 3:23-24 (NASB)

²³ Whatever you do, do your work heartily (*Lit from the soul*), as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

These are encouraging – and challenging words – especially if you don’t like your job or have trouble getting along with your boss...

The Bible is teaching that all Christians are ultimately working for the Lord. Paul also wrote –

1 Cor. 10:31 (NASB) “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

This passage calls for us to see our work from a different perspective than we may tend to do so... It is saying whether you are making sandwiches for little ones – or typing emails in a cubicle – or even scrubbing toilets – your work is to bring glory to God...

This message both begins and ends with God... Work is a gift FROM God, and Christians are to view their work as being done FOR God...

Again –

Proverbs 16:3 (NASB)

Commit (Lit *Roll*) your works to the LORD
And your plans will be established.

Questions to consider in Community Group:

- If work is a gift from God, why do we have the tendency of having a negative attitude toward work?
- The focal passage in Proverbs literally says that we should “go to”, and “observe” the ant. What is it about an ant that we learn?
- What should the Christian’s attitude be toward those who can not work?... What about toward those who are able, but will not work?
- What, if anything, can the church do to truly help those who are in poverty?
- What would be considered an optimum balance between work, rest and play?
- Please discuss the quote from Adrian Rogers – *“Friend, you cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom. And what one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government can’t give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody. And when half of the people get the idea they don’t have to work because the other half’s going to take care of them, and when the other half get the idea it does no good to work because somebody’s going to get what I work for. That, dear friend, is about the end of any nation.”*
- Please discuss the quote from Hugh Whelchel – *“There is a tension in the scriptures regarding work. For the Christian, life without work is meaningless, but work must never become the meaning of one’s life. Our identity is in Christ, not our work. Our union with (H)im transforms our hearts and gives us the desire to serve (H)im out of gratitude while we engage the world through our work.”*
- If a Christian is not enjoying their work, what should they do? – or – How can a Christian change from being negative to becoming positive in their attitude toward their work?
- When have you seen a Christian’s work be a blessing to others? – or – What does it mean to be a blessing to others in the context of work?
- What does it mean that Christians work for God? Should we see God as our Employer? (Why or why not?)
- What did you glean from this message?