



Work as a Calling

Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version.

If you were to rate on a scale of 1-10 how important your job is to God, what would you say? What do you think of the following possible answers?

1. I'd say my job is a 1 or a 2 with God, my work is completely separate from my spiritual life.
 - This is not true. Clearly God's desire is to be involved in all aspects of our life. If our faith is genuine, we can not separate faith in God from our work.
2. I'd say my job is a 3 or 4 with God, my work is important to God but not as important as pasturing or missionary work.
 - This is not true either. If God is in control of all things, He has placed us where we are for a reason. Thus we are working where we are to serve God's purpose.
3. I'd say my job is a 1 or 10 with God, my job is a mission field where I witness as well as make money to fund evangelism.
 - This is closer but still is not totally true. Over aggressiveness can hurt the cause of Christ. If our evangelistic activities impacts the quality of our work for our employer then it is a bad witness.

Why we work

What does Genesis 2:3 have to say about why we work?

Genesis 2:3 - Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

God Himself works... People are created in God's image so work is part of our purpose in life.

Genesis 1:27 - God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

What does Colossians 1:16-17 have to say about why we work?

Colossians 1:16-17 - For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Not only did God work to create the universe, He is still at work sustaining it...

Hebrews 1:3 - upholding all things by the word of His power

Likewise, we are called to join with God in bringing order to His creation.

Why does the creation need work to bring order to it?

Since mankind's fall into sin, effort needs to be expended to keep the universe from falling into disorder...

Genesis 3:17-19 - Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.'"

The Second Law of Thermodynamics which says that all things tend toward randomness came into force as a consequence of the fall of man. This law explains why things rust, break-down, deteriorate, and need maintenance.

What does Genesis 1:26 have to say about why we work?

Genesis 1:26 - Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

It was ordained by God that we should work. Indeed Adam was working even from the beginning in the Garden of Eden...

Genesis 2:15 - Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

How does knowing that we are reflecting the image of God when we work add dignity to our work?

We are joining with God in sustaining His creation when we work. Thus our work has a greater purpose than just getting a job done.

But surely not all work reflects the image of God... Do drug dealers reflect the image of God when they work?

No, the work of drug dealers does not reflect the image of God. We need to make a distinction between legitimate work that helps people and illegitimate work that hurts people.

What are the two great commandments of God?

Jesus said that we should love God and love our neighbor:

Matthew 22:37-40 - Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." "This is the first and great commandment. "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

How can we love God if we separate our work life from our spiritual life?

We spend a major part of our life at work. If we deny God being a part of that aspect of our lives, we are not loving Him.

How do we show love for our neighbor by the way we work?

- Where are you going to find your neighbor? Our neighbors are people in need that are around us. We are in a position to serve our peers, supervisors, employees, customers, associates, etc.
- We should include our family as being neighbors, indeed they are closest to us. We love our family by providing for them (God provides for us through our work)...

1 Timothy 5:8 - But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

What about disabled people who can not work? If a person becomes disabled and can no longer provide for their family, are they worse than an unbeliever?

God does not expect you do what you can not do so there are exceptions to the general principle but if you are able to work, you should work.

Your job today is the will of God

How does it change your view of your job if you see it as the will of God for you?

Seeing our job as the will of God for us helps us to see the dignity in our work.

There was a factory in England where the workers pushed their wheelbarrows, except for one slow worker: he pulled his wheelbarrow. A visitor asked the foreman why this man was so different from the others. "Oh, him!? He hates the sight of the bloomin' thing!"

Do you think many people feel what that worker felt about his job? What are the consequences of being in a job you hate?

It's a tragedy when you spend the greater part of your life doing something you despise. It affects your family, your attitude toward recreation, free time, etc.

Reference: Ephesians 6:5-9

"Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."

What kind of change can Christians make as they look at their job? What kind of change is described in our text?

If you can't change your job, you can change your attitude.

How do you change your attitude?

You can understand that your job is the will of God for you: "...doing the will of God from the heart."

What difference does understanding that your job is the will of God for you make?

It makes your job more of a ministry, something that has a calling to it, something that is bigger than yourself and something that God is in it with you.

Whom did Paul tell the servants that they are serving?

Paul said that servants should be as servants of Jesus Christ.

Why is it that whoever we serve, ultimately we are serving the Lord?

God is in control of all things and He puts authorities in our lives to act on His behalf...

Romans 13:1 - Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

If your job is the will of God for you, who is your boss?

If you are serving where God wants you to be, then you are serving Jesus Christ on your job. Jesus Christ is your employer. I like the bumper sticker: "My Boss is a Jewish Carpenter."

In the passage, what difference should it make if you know that when you're doing your work, you're really doing it for your Lord or Master, Jesus Christ.

- By the way I do my job, with the decisions I make daily, I have the opportunity to glorify God.
- God has put me where I am for a purpose, He is using me to further His interests even if I don't understand how.
- By my conduct at work, I can be laying up treasures in heaven (a portion of the fruit of my labors are saved for worldly use, some are saved for eternal use).

Do you think the church has done a good job of reinforcing secular work as working for God?

It is rare to hear in church that work as a carpenter or plumber or housewife is doing their Christian duty.

What should we be telling people doing secular work?

That a calling as a carpenter or plumber or housewife is every bit as much a calling as pastor, evangelist, or missionary.

Studs Terkel, in his book *Working* says that most people find their jobs confining and stifling. He quotes Nora Watson, who put her concern this way: "I think most of us are looking for a calling, not a job. Most of us, like the assembly line worker, have jobs that are too small for our spirit, jobs that are not big enough for people."

Your Job is a Calling

What is a calling?

A calling is a mission given to us by God. A calling is a purpose in life to do something bigger than ourselves.

Look again at Ephesians 6:5-8, what is the attitude that comes when you are serving Jesus Christ on the job?

We do our work as sacred service *"with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart"* (v.5).

What does it mean we should do our work *"with fear and trembling"*?

This is not fear before our worldly boss, but fear of the Lord. This means that we should work with reverence and awe because it is not just work, it is service to the Creator.

We fear and tremble before whom?

We work before God Himself. Yes God has established authorities over us but God is a "hands-on" manager and knows more about our work than our human supervisors do.

What does it mean we do our work in *"sincerity of heart"* (v.5)?

- We should not just view our work as routine where we are just going through the motions.
- We do our work with integrity, *"not with eyeservice as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ"* (v.6).

What picture comes to mind when you think of *"eyeservice"*?

Our work is not just for show, to be seen as a good worker, we are to accomplish something vital. What we do may appear like a small part but we don't see the bigger picture ourselves and the impact our good work can have on that bigger picture.

What is wrong with working as men-pleasers?

Working as men-pleasers falls short of the mark God has established for His children. We are called to a higher standard. Satisfying men means doing good work when you are in the sight of them. But satisfying God means doing good work all the time whether you are in the sight of men or not.

What does it mean that when we see ourselves working directly for the Jewish Carpenter that we will do our work with goodwill (v.7)?

This means we will have a good spirit concerning our work, that we will be interested in the good of others. Goodwill is about relationship building and this is often more important than the results of the work itself.

What good should we be doing in our work (v.8)? Who should be benefiting from our work?

We do good for our employer. We do good for those who get our product. We do good for those around us by the way we work.

Do any of you have a sense that you are called by God to do the work that you do?

I believe that God has called me to do the work that I do at TI because:

(1) It is where I found myself when I was saved...

1 Cor 7:20-24 - Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

(2) God has gifted me to do this job, He has given me the skills, passion and opportunity (same criteria as given ministers who are candidates for ordination).

(3) I trust that God knows best that I can represent Him best where I am for now.

Why is it important for someone in ministry to have a call?

If you are not acting in accord with God's will, you will be ineffective, a failure and miserable. God has a mission for all of us but this mission is matched to the gifts He has given us. Our calling must match our gifts or our efforts will be counter-productive.

Why don't we usually think of secular pursuits in terms of a calling?

People have a propensity to containerize certain aspects of their life. People think they need to have some separation between their spiritual life and their everyday working life. But this is not how God looks at things, God will judge us on how we spend all our time.

If we can see our work as a calling, no matter what that work is, how does that change what we do on the job?

When we see our work as a calling, we should see our work as a way in which we proclaim God's truth.

If we have different work options, how do we know which job is the right one for us?

Here are five questions we can ask ourselves about our work options to determine the best one:

1. Is what I am doing the most productive thing I can do with my life in the present circumstances?
2. Does my vocation make the best use of the talents and skill God has given me? (the best money may not be the best use of your talents and skill)
3. Does my work allow me to treat all persons as being important to God? (if a salesman is required to lie to customers to make a sale, then this job should be rejected)
4. Is the work the kind of occupation I can pray about on the job? Can God work in and through me? (the runner in *Chariots of Fire* said, "when I run I feel the smile of God upon me")
5. Is this the only position open to me at this time? (good, practical advice)