



Work

“whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

If you were to rate on a scale of 1-10 how important your job is to God, what would you say?

1. I've heard people say that they keep their work separate from their spiritual life so these people would have to say their rating is only a 1 or a 2 with God.
 - But this perspective is not supported in Scripture. 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. Others may be inclined to say their job is a 3 or 4 with God... they consider their work to be 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. And I occasionally find people who would say their job is a 9 or 10 with God... they consider their job as a mission field where they witness as well as make money to fund evangelism.
 - This is closer in terms of rating but the reason for the rating is not valid. Over aggressiveness can hurt the cause of Christ. If our evangelistic activities impact the quality of our work for our employer then it is a bad witness.

From the Scripture we look at this morning, we'll see that our work is very important to God and hopefully these passages will help us have the right attitude about our work as well.

Why we work

But before we get into the specific passages dealing with our attitude about work, it would be helpful to consider why we work...

I'm sure some of you are thinking, well we work to earn a living. Anyone who has lost a job can tell you that...

Calvin Miller tells a parable of a king who commanded his wise men to condense all human wisdom into a small and manageable area of print. After 12 years of work, they returned to him with 12 volumes. "It's too large," he said. "Condense it further." They spent another year and came back with a single volume. "No," said the king, "it's still too large. Condense it further." The next day the wise men came back with only one line on a piece of paper: "There is no free lunch."

But as Christians, we don't work simply to live; we live to serve God through our work. The Christian perspective about work should bring a touch of glory to mundane tasks that we have to do to earn a living.

God has promised us that He will provide for all of our needs...

Matthew 6:31-32 – “Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

One way that God supplies our needs is by giving us jobs.

It is God's plan that we work. God worked in the creation of the universe and He is still at work sustaining it...

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.*

It was ordained by God from the beginning that we should 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."*

Since we were created in the image of God, we should expect to mirror what our Heavenly Father does by working ourselves. And having dominion over God's creation means that there are things to do to manage what God has made. Indeed Adam was working even from the beginning in the Garden of Eden before he faced the consequences of sin...

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

The reason why work often seems so onerous is that “thorns and thistles” were among the consequences of our sin. As “thorns and thistles made it difficult for Adam to tend the garden in his day, our work is more difficult by things that break or otherwise hinder our productivity.

Consider this: when we work, we are joining with God in bringing order to the world and sustaining His creation. Thus our work has a greater purpose than just getting a job done and putting food on the table.

Now we need to introduce a qualifier here about what kind of work reflects the image of God... Not all work sustains God's creation, some work serves to tear it down. For example, the work of drug dealers destroys lives so this hardly reflects the image of God. So we need to make a distinction between legitimate work that helps people and illegitimate work that hurts people.

As we look at why we work, consider the two great commandments of God. Jesus summarized all the Ten Commandments as well as the rest of the Law in these two great commandments:

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."*

Our inclination is to separate our work life from our spiritual life but this is not loving God with all our heart, soul and mind. 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.

Also, the way we work reflects on how we love our neighbor. Our neighbors are people in need that are around us. In the course of our work, 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 the closest to us. As God loves us and provides for us by giving us the opportunity to work, we love our family by providing for them...
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.*

Your job today is the will of God

Let's take a look at one of our key passages about work: Ephesians 6:5-9. This passage encourages us to have the right attitude about our work... seeing our job as the will of God for us helps us to see the dignity in our work no matter what it is.

I heard a story about a factory in England where the workers used wheelbarrows. Contrary to all the other workers, one slow worker pulled his wheelbarrow rather than pushing it. A visitor asked the foreman why this man was so different from the others. "Oh, him!? He hates the sight of the bloomin' thing!"

I would expect that such a worker would be at the top of the list for who would be terminated if the factory had to reduce its workforce. But worse than that, it's a tragedy when you spend the greater part of your life doing something you despise. It affects your family and even your attitude toward recreation and free time.

I don't think I've ever met anyone who claimed to have the perfect job. There is always something about their job that they'd change if they could. But the thing that would help the most that a person can change is their attitude. If you recognize that your job is the will of God for you, it makes your job more of a ministry, something that has a calling to it, something that is bigger than yourself.

Listen to what Paul writes to Christian slaves and masters. And consider the way the workers and the owners are to think about that they do...

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."

Notice that Paul said servants should consider themselves as servants of Jesus Christ as they carried out their responsibilities.

Whoever we serve, ultimately we are serving the Lord because 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 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."

It should make a big difference knowing that our work, whatever it is, is really being done for our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The way we do our jobs, with the decisions we make daily, we have the opportunity to glorify God. Almighty God who is in control of all things has put us where we are for a purpose, He wants to use us to further His interests even if we don't understand how. By our conduct at work, we can

be laying up treasures in heaven if we are a living testimony of what Jesus has done in our lives.

I don't think the church has done a very good job of reinforcing that secular work is working for God. It is rare to hear in church that work as a carpenter or plumber or engineer or housewife is doing their Christian duty. Churches should tell people that a calling as a carpenter or plumber or engineer or housewife is every bit as much a calling as pastor, evangelist, or missionary.

Your Job is a calling

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."*

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

Ephesians 6:5-8 addresses the attitude we should have when we are serving Jesus Christ on the job: We do our work as sacred service *"with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart"* (v.5).

We should do our work *"with fear and trembling"* not as fear before our worldly boss, but in 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 work before God Himself. Certainly God has established authorities over us but God is also a "hands-on" manager and knows more about our work than our human supervisors could ever hope to.

Note that verse Ephesians 6:5 says we do our work in *"sincerity of heart."* 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).

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.

Ephesians 6:6 says we should not work 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. To satisfy men in your work means doing good

work when you are in the sight of men. But satisfying God means doing good work all the time whether you are in the sight of men or not.

Ephesians 6:7 says that we should do our work with goodwill. This means we need to be interested in the good of others. Goodwill is about relationship building and this byproduct of work is often more important than the results of the work itself.

Ephesians 6:8 gives us a motivation for doing good in our work: the Lord will reward us by being good to us. We do good when the results of our labors are 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. Christians know that even if our worldly boss misses our doing good and fails to reward us, the Lord does not miss these things. We know there will be an ultimate performance review where our doing good will be richly rewarded.

I believe I have been called by God to my work at Texas Instruments for a number of reasons. First of all, 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.

God is in control and He put us where we are at for a purpose. Now there are different seasons of our life and it may become necessary to change jobs to be in God's will but we should not allow our discontentment with where we are in life be the only indication that we should seek a change. Discontentment with this fallen world is part of the human condition. If God wants us to move on to something else, there will be multiple indicators in the form of open and closed doors that will help direct us.

Also, I believe I have been called by God to my work at Texas Instruments because He has gifted me to do my job, He has given me the skills and passion to do my job along with the opportunity. This is the same criteria this is given ministers who are candidates for ordination. And I trust God that He knows best about where I can most effectively represent Him for this period of my life.

At a theological seminary or when people are being ordained to the professional ministry, they're often asked if they have a call. A call is God making His will for us known. It is important for those in the professional ministry to have a call because, 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.

We never ask a person who is going into business if he has a calling because we don't usually think of secular jobs in terms of a mission from God. People tend to look at things this way because they 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, we should see our work as a way in which we proclaim God's truth. Let's take a look at a practical way to do this...

Adorning the doctrine of God

Reference: Titus 2:9-14

Paul wrote a letter to Titus who had been sent to the island of Crete to establish a church. Crete was a difficult place to minister. It had a reputation throughout the Roman world because the people had sunk to a deplorable moral level. They were lazy, irresponsible, drunk. Pagans had difficulty describing the dishonesty, laziness, and gluttony of the people living in Crete. One of their poets (Epimenides) described the people as *"liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."*

In Paul's letter to Titus, he recommended a strategy for ministering in that difficult place: (1) He was to set up people of character as leaders in the church. They were to be people who not just taught but also modeled the message. (2) They were also to make the message practical, to teach people what was in accord with sound doctrine.

In Chapter 2, Paul describes the character traits men, women, and servants should have. I found it interesting that he provided separate descriptions for both older and younger men as well as older and younger women. But this morning, we are going to focus on Paul's instructions for servants because this applies to all of us. We are all in some area of service...

Titus 2:9-14 - *Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the*

present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Of all the things servants are to do per Titus 2:9-10, the executive summary of all this is that servants are to *"adorn the doctrine of God"* in the way they work. The doctrine of God is what God teaches us through the Bible. It is all about who God is, who we are, why we are here, how we may have purpose in life, etc.

The one place in Titus that talks about reaching people other than establishing a church and teaching the Bible is adorning the doctrine of God in your work. *"adorn the doctrine of God"* brings up the image of putting it on like clothing. It means to set the doctrine of God forth in its most attractive fashion in the way we live in ordinary life. As clothing covers us, it is what people see when they look at us. And it is a deliberate act of the will, it is not something that comes natural.

Those who wore the doctrine of God in the Cretan society would have stood out there because good workers that were sober, dependable, and truthful were rare.

Being a good worker includes paying attention to detail, following through to make sure a job is completed right the first time and anticipating the needs of others without them having to ask. When you are good worker, people will want to know what drives you and this presents you with an opportunity to tell them about our real Boss.

Being sober is all about being alert and exhibiting self-control. Being sober goes hand-in-hand with being a good worker... you can not be a good worker if you are dull of mind and can not control your self.

Dependability is a characteristic of God and this is a necessary trait to be credible as someone who claims to know God.

Like dependability, being truthful is necessary to build relationships with people so that they can trust what you have to say. It is necessary to be accepted as being truthful in order to be effective in fulfilling the Great Commission. Being truthful is like God is, and it is a byproduct of loving others as God loves us.

In Titus 2:9-14, Paul is writing to bondservants or slaves. I like the word bondservants here better than slaves because the word slave has connotations associated with it as a result of the type of slavery we had in North America. The type of slavery they had in biblical times is better described as

bondsman-hood, where people were essentially employees of another like we have today. To be an employee today means that we are obligated to do a job by a contract, a similar concept. Employees today are often classified as contractors which is effectively bond servant hood.

Wearing the doctrine of God makes the same bold impact on our society today as it did in Paul's day in Crete. The pervasive condition in our society today is materialism, which holds to the idea that the matter of this universe has always been in existence and not something that God created. The core belief of materialists was best expressed by the late Carl Sagan, a prominent spokesperson for the atheist perspective who often said, "*the Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.*"

The materialism of our age has made lying as common in our society today as it was in ancient Crete. If the cosmos is all there is, then there is no universal truth and people are free to craft their own truth by lying. People living out their materialistic beliefs do all things with selfish motives modifying their moral code to accommodate their self-interests. When we are truthful, honest, and act selflessly, we will stand out in a crowd since we exhibit a characteristic that people will be attracted to.

In Titus 2:9-10 Paul mentions five specific things that are part of adorning the doctrine of God in our work...

First of all God's servants are to be subject to those in authority over them obeying their boss as they would God Himself. Recall Romans 13:1... it is God who gave your Supervisor his or her authority over you. And the Christian should respect the authority of their boss as being from God.

Next, Christians should seek to please their boss. Doesn't this seem like common sense? But pleasing your boss goes beyond just doing what is expected or what you've been asked to do. If you love your neighbor, you will put yourself in their shoes and meet their needs without having to be asked. This concept reminds me of the character Radar on the old TV program MASH. Radar had an uncanny ability to read the Colonel's mind which made for some humorous situations but the Christian who is really seeking to please God by pleasing his boss will meet his boss's needs before he even thinks of it.

The third characteristic a Christian worker should have is to not to talk back to their boss. To be successful at this means to have the right attitude. If you think your boss is only going to give you meaningless exercises to do that detracts from what you think you should be doing then you'll have a propensity to argue with him. It is much better to just accept an assignment when it is given and then figure out how you're going to do it later rather than immediately jump to

the conclusion that it is a waste of time. This is something that prayer can certainly help with, it is amazing how God has made seemingly overwhelming tasks that I've prayed about either go away become something that I could easily do.

The next characteristic a Christian worker should have is to not to steal from their boss. We usually think in terms of office supplies but the bigger problem is stealing time from your employer. Coming into work late, or taking too long a lunch break, or working on personal tasks during business hours all steal time from your employer and does harm to your credibility as a witness for Christ.

And the fifth characteristic a Christian worker should have is to show all good fidelity. That is, the Christian worker should demonstrate that he may be trusted with the responsibility he is given. Joseph demonstrated this characteristic when he was a slave in Potiphar's house and later when he was thrown into an Egyptian prison. In both situations, Joseph demonstrated he could be trusted in the responsibility he was given so that he was given more responsibility to the point where he was in charge of everything.

Impacting Society

When you consider the direction that society is going today it sure doesn't look like the Church is making much of an impact. Our society is in a condition where it is no longer acceptable to teach about the Creator in schools, where there are people who have committed their lives to purging any mention of God from our public institutions, where murdering unborn children is legal, where teaching about condoms is preferred over teaching about abstinence, where we are having to debate what constitutes a marriage, and where it is not considered polite to tell an unbeliever about what Jesus Christ has done in your life.

Rather than the church impacting society, it appears to me that it is the other way around, that society is making a great impact on the church. For example, the divorce rate statistics between church goers and non-church-goers is virtually the same. There are many organizations of people today that call themselves Christians but deny the fundamental beliefs that the Bible teaches such as the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, sinless life, and resurrection. Even among the churches that are orthodox, many are lukewarm toward Christ thinking that their material prosperity indicates that they are spiritually healthy.

Now I don't want to sound discouraging because God is using His church to change lives on a case-by-case basis. There are more born-again Christians in the world today

than there ever has been. And the rate at which people are yielding their lives to Christ is greater than it ever has been. As Jesus said, the wheat and tares are growing up together. As bad as society is today, imagine how bad it would be if the church was not in the world. Some day the world will experience what this is like. Because the day is coming when the Holy Spirit who is restraining evil will cease this ministry...

2 Thessalonians 2:7 - For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 in context is referring to the rapture of the church. The Holy Spirit indwells believers and is restraining evil today through the believers who are in the world. But the day is coming when the Lord will remove those who have yielded their lives to Jesus and at that time, the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit will be removed as well. God will turn mankind over to themselves letting evil run its natural course and the result will be the Great Tribulation which culminates at the battle of Armageddon.

Paul outlines a strategy for impacting society with Christianity in Titus 2:11:13...

denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

Our blessed hope is our resurrection into eternal, glorified bodies that will occur at the rapture of the church. This event could happen at any time without warning. All generations of Christians have lived with this expectation,

Looking for our blessed hope makes Christians stand out in the world because when we are expecting the Lord to return at any moment, we are continuously making ourselves ready for Him. That means we live righteously knowing that we could be in His presence at any moment. Righteous living, or in other words, living rightly, is unusual in the world and will be noticed.

If we are living righteously means we're living in such a way that sin is not a part of our lives. Putting this in terms that even the worldly can appreciate, living rightly means living free from the consequences of sin. This does not mean that you can sin without consequences, instead it means that since your sins are reduced, the consequences from sin will likewise be reduced. Since the consequences of sin are so pervasive in this fallen world, those who are free of those consequences will stand out.

In addition to living rightly, there are also byproducts of being in a relationship with God that makes us stand out in the world...

Gal 5:22-23 - the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

As Philippians 4:6-7 makes clear, these fruits of the Spirit stand out in the world because they defy all understanding by those who don't know the Lord...

Phil 4:6-7 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

If have not experienced the peace which surpasses all understanding, or if you hunger and thirst for a life free from sin and sin's consequences, I'd encourage you to open yourself up to Jesus Christ. The Lord loves us and desires a personal relationship with each of us. He died in our place so that our sins may be forgiven to make a relationship with Him possible. So the ball is in our court to respond...

Romans 10:9 - if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Let's close with a prayer...

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to come together today to worship you. We love to learn about your plan for us and are excited about seeing your plan come to fruition. Lord, if there is anyone here who does not have a personal relationship with you, I pray that today would be the day that they respond to the Holy Spirit by admitting their unacceptable condition before you, believing that Jesus Christ paid their sin debt in full, and committing their life to you. For all those who do that, we pray that you would work a miracle in their lives so that we may all be together in eternity. These things I ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

We are going to close our services today with a song. If any one would like to take advantage of this opportunity to make a public profession of faith, please meet me up front here during the song. Or maybe you'd like to join this church, I'd invite you to meet me up front as well. Or whatever decision you'd like to make public, please come on down...