



Work Ethic

How we should view our earning a living

Proverbs 22:29 - Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men.

What does it mean that a man who excels in his work will stand before kings?

People with authority and responsibility will seek the presence of those who excel in their work.

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People who are successful know that a key to continued success is to seek the council of other successful people.

- Napoleon sought out “lucky” officers for his staff, he knew there was something more to their successes than random occurrences. Indeed, God is in control and there are no random occurrences.

How is it that those who excel in their work come to be before kings?

There work is noticed, it stands out because it is out of the ordinary.

How do you distinguish ordinary work from excellent work?

- Ordinary work is the minimum requirement. It is meeting expectations and is consistent with what has commonly been done before. It aligned with the world’s philosophy, “you get what you pay for.”
- Excellent work on the other hand exceeds expectations and goes beyond what is paid for. It is uncommon and so it stands out as the exception rather than the rule.

What is the significance of excellence being noticed?

Who notices it?

Everyone who see it or hear about it notices it and since it is rare, people talk about it. So the one who does excellent work becomes famous because of his work.

Is it a good thing to want to be famous?

It depends on the motivation

What motivation do worldly people have for wanting to be famous?

- They have no hope of eternal life so the only thing they can hope for is that people would remember them when they are gone. What a shallow hope.
- Others equate fame with riches. After all in this world where every thing has a monetary value, people can cash in their fame by writing a book about how they became famous which will be purchased by many others who want to be famous.
- Excellent work is always a surprise.

What is the problem with desiring wealth? Isn’t wealth the measure of success?

- Wealth is the measure of success by the world but not in God’s eyes. Wealth has no eternal value because it will all eventually be burned up.
- The great problem with desiring wealth is that we look to it as the source of contentment. When we achieve wealth, we realize that we are not content and then desire more. It is an endless cycle that keeps us from the joy that the Lord offers us.
- An unhealthy desire for wealth can lead to dangerous sinful behavior to acquire money...
1 Tim 6:10 - For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
- Desiring wealth if properly motivated is a good thing but usually the motivation is not with an eternal perspective, usually it is temporal.

What is the right motivation for desiring to be before kings, to be famous, or to be wealthy?

To see God glorified. To have an opportunity to be used by God to participate with Him in extending His kingdom.

Is it selfish of God to demand that we glorify Him?

- God does not demand that we glorify Him. He is the ultimate gentleman in this regard. Our glorifying God is the natural response for those who know Him because of who He is and what He has done for us.
- Glorifying God is more in our interest than it is Him. God doesn't need us to glorify Him. His glory is not diminished with out us. God gives us the opportunity to participate with Him in others coming into an eternal relationship with Him. So in the process of glorifying God, the byproduct of this is more people being saved and we are blessed.

How are we blessed by allowing God to use us in helping people to know Him?

There will be rewards for those who participate with God in His plan to win souls...

1 Cor 3:13-14 - each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

What kind of work withstands the test of time?

- Only saved people. Everything we accomplish in this world will be burned up except the people who come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- This is why Jesus exhorted us to use our worldly resources to help others to know Him and become saved...
Luke 16:9 - And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home.

How does our excellent work glorify God?

- People recognize that we must be motivated by someone greater than ourselves.
- We are given opportunities to attribute our success to the One who made it possible.
- People are drawn to us for counsel and this gives us opportunities to testify of the Lord.

How may we do excellent work?

Remember who we really work for...

Ephesians 6:5-8 - 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 eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill 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.

I like the bumper sticker: "My Boss is a Jewish Carpenter"

Do you enjoy your work?

- We sometimes think that other people have dream jobs and that work for them is a constant delight, but that is seldom the case.
- Recall that one of the consequences of the fall was "thorns and thistles" (Genesis 3:18). This translates into things that threaten our productivity that needs attention in our day.

Paderewski was one of the most diligent concert pianists about practicing. He once played before Queen Victoria. She said, "Mr. Paderewski, you are a genius." He replied, "That may well be, but before I was a genius, I was a drudge."

What makes a difference in whether we enjoy our work or not, whatever we do?

- It's not what we do, but the attitude with which we do it that can make a difference in our jobs.
- If we recognize that God is Almighty, the implication of this is that He is in control of all things and has placed us in our job for a purpose. This makes our job 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."

What is a calling?

It is something that God has ordained that we do. He has selected us for a particular service, equipped us, and orchestrated circumstances to put us where He wants us.

Do you feel called to do the work you are doing?

I have come to recognize my work at TI as a calling for this time of my life...

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

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" (v.5), that is, with reverence and awe.

We fear and tremble before whom?

Before the Lord

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

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"?

We do good work all the time, not just when we are being watched.

What does it mean that those who do excellent work do it with goodwill (v.7)?

- We do it with goodness (v.8). 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.
- We have a good spirit about what we do. We look for a positive outcome for all involved (what we call win-win at TI). We look beyond the immediate and anticipate needs out in time and address them.
- As Christians should go beyond the letter of the law and give heed to the spirit of the law, we should seek to go beyond the minimum requirements and exceed expectations in our work.

How does Ephesians 6:5-8 show that those who do excellent work for the Lord do it with hope?

- It says "knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord" (v.7b).
- This reinforces that we know God will reward us for a job well done, if not in this world then certainly in the next.

How does the reference to slaves or free apply to this age?

Slaves are employees who do the bidding of another, the free are bosses and business owners who have more freedom to determine what they do.

Why would the same admonition about excellent work apply both to the slaves and free?

Being slaves and free is a relative condition. We all have elements of slavery and freedom no matter what position we are in. Even business owners have investors and customers they must treat as the boss.

What does it mean to vie our work as a calling?

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

Why does viewing our work as a calling result in our doing excellent work?

Not only does this exhort us to put in more effort and be more diligent, we realize that we are not in this by ourselves, that the Lord Himself is close at hand to guide and help us.

How should Christians who recognize their work as a sacred calling conduct themselves?

As representatives of God...

Titus 2:9-10 - 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.

By the way we do our work, we set forth the truth about God in its most attractive fashion.

As we look at this verse in Titus, consider that:

Titus was 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."

What strategy did Paul recommend to Titus for ministering in that hard place?

- He was to set up people of character as leaders in the church. They were to be people who taught and modeled the message.
- They were also to make the message practical, to teach people what was in accord with sound doctrine.

What instruction did Paul have for workers in the church at Crete?

Slaves are to "adorn the doctrine of God" in all things (in the way they work). Note that this is the one place in Titus which talks about reaching people other than establishing a church and teaching the Bible is adorning the doctrine of God in your work.

**What does it mean to "adorn the doctrine of God"?
What image comes to your mind when you think of adorning?**

It means to set the doctrine of God forth in its most attractive fashion in the way we live in ordinary life.

What difference might that have made in Crete?

They stood out by being truthful.

What difference might that mean for us today?

The same difference...

Two men were discussing a new house one of them was thinking of buying. One named the builder and then said to the other, "You don't have to worry about buying one of his houses. He builds Christianity into every house he builds."

How may we stand before kings?

If you want to stand before kings, the best way to do this is to do excellent work. And the best way to do excellent work is to do what God wants you to do thereby tapping into His unlimited resources. Note that it is not possible to know what God wants you to do until you let Him into your life to do a work in you. If you have not received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, I urge you to do this today.