



Introduction

When God created the earth, He left mankind in charge to manage and care for it. Christians, along with the rest of mankind, play a vital role in fulfilling God’s purpose for the earth. While some are called to be pastors, and some are called to missions in far away places, most are called to assist in the much wider task of everyday work. The work of the Lord includes all that is necessary to keep this planet in order and to maintain life on earth.

This study will look at the ministry of employment. It will explore God’s expectation for the disciple in the marketplace.

Work is God’s Idea

Starting with Adam, God’s intent for man was that man should work.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 2:15

- Circle the place where the Lord put man.
- Underline why the Lord put man in the garden.
- Notice that God’s provision of work happened long before Eve and Adam sinned. **So work is not a punishment for sin.** Rather, work is a provision of God intended for man’s benefit.

The obligation of work was passed on to New Testament Christian.

¹¹ *Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹² so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

- Beside leading a quiet life and minding their own business, circle what Christians were instructed to do.
- Underline why it was important for the believer to work.
- *When you work side by side with non-Christians, they notice how you work. The assumption of this verse is that the Christian’s work would be a positive influence on “outsiders”.*

There is specific instruction in the New Testament about how to deal with those who choose not to work.

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

2 Thessalonians 3:10

- Circle the treatment one should receive if he chooses not to work.

Character Counts

It should go without saying that all character qualities of a disciple should find their expression in the work of that disciple. Thus, a disciple should be honest and humble, generous and patient, faithful and loving as he deals with others in the normal course of work.

Learn about the character qualities of a disciple in the **VDRC** study series on **Character**. You can find six studies in the **Study** section of the **VDRC** website.

The Curse

While it is true that work was introduced before sin occurred, work was made painful as a result of Adam’s sin.



Genesis 3:17

There may be some instances where a believer is unable to work either because of sickness, disability or loss of a job. In those unusual circumstances, help and assistance is appropriate.

Working for God

Many Christians feel that only those who are involved in “full-time Christian work” are working for God. They think that everyday work like farming or washing windows does not qualify as working for God. Nothing could be further from the truth.

²³ *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,* ²⁴ *since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

Colossians 3:23-24

- Circle the amount of “heart” that should be involved in your work effort.
- Underline who it is that you are working for in verse 23.
- In verse 24, circle the one you are serving.
- *Notice that this verse is all-inclusive when it comes to the type of work being discussed. **Whatever you do** includes bus driving, assembly line work, hard physical labor, sales work, customer service or being an evangelist. For the Christian, every job has Jesus as the supervisor.*

There is a difference in function between gospel work and ordinary work, but no difference in acceptability before God.

Larry Peabody

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul gives further insight into the motivation behind one’s work.

⁵ *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.* ⁶ *Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.* ⁷ *Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,* ⁸ *because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.*

Ephesians 6:5-8

- In verse 5 circle the three characteristics of obedience that slaves should practice.
- *Notice that slaves are to obey their earthly masters just like they obey Jesus*
- Underline in verse 6 how a “slave of Christ” is to work.
- **What do you think:** *what does it mean to serve men “as if you were serving the Lord”?*

Being a Godly Employee

Serving God with all of your heart is at the very center of being a godly employee. But there are other important factors as well.



Everyday Workers

Scripture is full of examples of men with everyday jobs serving God with all of their heart:

Tending Livestock:

- > Abraham
- > Jacob
- > Moses
- > David

Government Administration

- > Joseph
- > David
- > Daniel
- > Nehemiah

Craftsmen

- > Noah (boat making)
- > Jesus (Carpentry)
- > Paul (Tent making)

The issue is never **what** you do but **how** you do it.

Slave as an Employee

New Testament usage of the word **slave** most closely relates to the modern day equivalent of an employee. There are many differences between slavery and modern day employment, but the parallels are useful when considering a modern day employee’s conduct on the job.

¹⁸ *Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.* ¹⁹ *For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.* ²⁰ *But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.* ²¹ *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

1 Peter 2:18-21

- Underline the two types of masters to whom an employee (slave) should submit.
- *Another way of phrasing the question Peter asks in verse 20 would be "Is there any merit in patiently enduring a rebuked for doing what is wrong?" The obvious answer is that patient endurance for wrongdoing is not commendable because wrongdoing deserves punishment.*
- Frame the action that is commendable before God.
- *Enduring unjust suffering follows the example that Jesus gave. Patient endurance, when you've done nothing wrong is pleasing to God.*

Doing what is good and right is always acceptable before God.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

- Circle the thing for which we were created.
- *Good works are not limited to acts of kindness or generosity. The work that you do on the job is considered good in God's sight.*

Even when the product of our work is good, other influences can creep in to endanger the godly focus of our effort.

¹¹ *Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.* ¹² *Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

Deuteronomy 8:11-14

- In verse 11, circle the thing about which you should be careful.
- Underline the things that can cause your heart to turn proud.
- *Fine houses, growing herds and flocks and increased silver and gold are all results of successful work. Those things are not bad in and of themselves. But the problem comes when we take credit for the things we accumulate.*

Or, consider Solomon's observation:

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 5:10

- Circle the expectation one should have who loves money.
- Underline who it is that is never satisfied with his income

Think Twice

You may work for a boss who is harsh, critical and unfair. Think twice before you go looking for a job somewhere else. God may have placed you there as His ambassador. Or God may be using him as the sandpaper in your life to make you more like Jesus.

Your work is patterned after the work God did when he created the heavens and the earth. He called that work "good".



Genesis 1:31

Memorize

The desire for more and more money can be a snare and a trap for everyone who works.

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

1 Timothy 6:6-9

- Circle the characteristic that needs to accompany godliness.
- Underline the things with which we should be content.
- Frame the effect that wanting to get rich has on people.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

1 Timothy 6:10

Being a Godly Employer

Just as the New Testament gives direction to slaves, it also gives direction to masters. The modern day equivalent of a master is an employer. Those who are employers are called to the same wholehearted obedience to Jesus as those who are employees. But employers also have more responsibilities.

Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Colossians 4:1

- Circle what an employer (master) must provide for his employees (slaves).
- *That which is "right and fair" for a slave in New Testament times included food, clothing, rest times and a reasonable expectation of work intensity. Today the list includes at least proper compensation and a safe working environment. And, depending upon the job, it may include many other things.*
- Underline why an employer should treat his employees with what is right and fair.

Compensation of workers is something that God is interested in.

¹⁴ Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. ¹⁵ Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

- Underline who you should not take advantage of.
- Circle the action required when you hire someone to work for you.
- *The command to pay him daily is based upon the assumption that workers were hired infrequently for a short period of time. Weekly, bi-weekly or monthly pay dates are acceptable when there is agreement between the employer and the employee.*

Contentment

Paul was able to find contentment with the things God gave him.



¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:12-13

The Golden Rule

A good rule to follow when dealing with employees is the saying of Jesus that has become known as the **Golden Rule**:



So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:12

Employers, like employees must be careful about the trap of money. Employers tend to be the ones who accumulate wealth.

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

1 Timothy 6:17-18

- Underline in verse 17 the commandment to those who are rich in the present world.
- Circle the purpose behind God's rich provision of things.
- *God delights in giving us the pleasure of things so long as our hope is placed in him and not in those things. When our focus becomes the things we have rather than God, who provided them, we place ourselves in danger.*
- In verse 18, circle each of the four things commanded.

Remember to Rest

God, when he created heaven and earth, rested on the seventh day. The practice of resting from work became part of the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses.

⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 20:9-11

- Underline who is commanded to rest in verse 10.
- In verse 11, frame the reason we are to rest.

The command to rest on the Sabbath is part of the Law that was set aside when Jesus died on the cross. Nowhere in the New Testament is the Sabbath Day rest commanded. However, the practice of resting from your work is a God given example. Ignoring His example is disrespectful to Him.

No one on their deathbed ever wished that they had spent more time at work.

Review

In the spaces on the next page, write a brief summary of the key points made in each section of this study. Try to keep your statements concise and short. The act of summarizing forces you to pick the most important elements and focus on them.

The Rich Fool

Jesus told a story about a wealthy man whose life was taken from him in the midst of his plans of expansion. Jesus called him a fool. You can read the story in Luke 12:16-21.

The last verse explains why he was called a fool!

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Application

What has God spoken to you about in this study?

What do you think your need is?

What is it that God wants you to do?

How are you going to check-up on yourself?

Don't Skip the Application

Applying God's Word to your life is the most important part of study.