



“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Should I Expect a Fulfilling Job?

Central Truth: God intends you to benefit from employment.

L230. Date: January 1994. **Text:** II Thessalonians 3:10; Genesis 39:1-6; Luke 10:7; Jeremiah 22:13. **Topic:** Stewardship; Work.

Do you have a job? Do you have a “good” job? How do you determine whether your job is “good” or not? A good job is more than one with a high salary. There are four guidelines which will help you evaluate your employment.

(1) Does your job provide sufficient income for you to furnish the necessities of life to your dependents? Does it meet needs even if it does not supply all the wants? (2) Does your job provide the goods and/or services which meet the needs of people? The end of all effort is to serve God by serving people in His name. People are served when their needs are met. (3) Is your job honorable in its demands upon you and what it offers to those who receive its product? A Christian should not work in any employment (as the liquor or tobacco industry) which brings harm to others. (4) Is your job agreeable to the goals you have in life for yourself and your loved ones? A good job does not take a man away from his family to their detriment.

If the answer to those four questions is a positive “yes,” you have a good job. If the answer is “no” to one or more of those questions, you probably need to look for other employment. Bring God's will into your work place. After all, *“Ye serve the Lord Christ”* (Colossians 3:24).

Former President Calvin Coolidge said, “No enterprise can exist for itself alone. It ministers to some great need, it performs some great service, not for itself, but for others; or, failing therein, it ceases to be profitable and ceases to exist.”

God Approves Work

As a lad, I thought that work was a part of the curse God put on the human race because of sin in the Garden of Eden. It was surprising for a lazy little boy to learn that work is a blessing, not a curse from God! God created Adam and placed him in the beautiful Garden of Eden. He provided food, water, health, divine companionship, human companionship, and . . . work! That was before the fall into sin. God put Adam in that garden *“to dress it and to keep it”* (Genesis 2:15). Adam worked before sin came into the world. His work was not a burden, but a joy. That is what the Christian's work should be today. After Adam and Eve had sinned, God pronounced a judgment upon each of them. To the man He said, *“Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground”* (Genesis 3:17-19). There the burden of labor was added to work. So it is the burden of work, not work itself, which came by sin.

Thank God for the privilege to work. Ask infirm or elderly people if work is a curse or a blessing to them. They will testify that to lose the ability of productive labor is a heavy burden to bear. You may not enjoy going to work each day, but thank God that you have a job and the health to do it. That is God's ordained way for us to provide for the necessities of life for ourselves, our loved ones, and others who are in need.

God Approves Honest Work (II Thessalonians 3:10)

God condemns laziness. All through the Bible there is a condemnation of the person who is able to work but will not do it. The “sluggard” is rebuked particularly in the book of Proverbs. Read Proverbs 6:6-11, for instance. The person who loves sleep too well is threatened by poverty, according to Proverbs 20:13. The person who finds excuses for not working will suffer lack to the point of begging, according to Proverbs 20:4. Work is the way to wealth.

God strictly forbids “blind” charity which provides for people who just live off charity. Some people make it a practice to depend on the governmental agencies or the benevolent spirit of Christian people for their livelihood. Of course, those who are in true need must be cared for. God said, *“Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of*

God in him?” (I John 3:17). On the other hand, the apostle Paul wrote, *“When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”* (II Thessalonians 3:10). That principle should be applied today. The same man came to my church office twice asking for cash so he could attend his mother's funeral in Oklahoma. The problem with his requests was that they were about eighteen months apart!

There are “professionals” who prey on the sympathy of God's people. They usually send in a woman and a little child to ask for help while the man sits outside in a car smoking a cigarette or a cigar. Such people make us suspicious about anyone's request for help. We must be careful not to fail to provide for a real need because of the abuse of some. We serve God by meeting the needs of people in the name of God.

God approves honest work and condemns unjust gain. His Word says, *“Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right”* (Proverbs 16:8). Do you really believe that? If so, you are an honest person. To gain wealth by deceit (which the Bible calls “a lying tongue”) is to seek death (Proverbs 21:6). To oppress the poor in order to make money is to guarantee that one will come to want himself (Proverbs 22:16). Read James 5:1-6 again. Those who amass wealth and live luxuriously through the hardships of others are certainly headed for the judgment of God. Be warned and be honest in making, giving, investing, and saving your money. God holds you accountable for what you do with what you have. That is a part of the stewardship of employment.

God Approves a Faithful worker (Genesis 39:1-6)

Do you remember Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob? He left an example of faithful work under the most trying circumstances. He was so hated by his brothers that they schemed to kill him, but they sold him into slavery in a foreign land instead. Joseph was purchased by Potiphar, an officer of the Pharaoh of Egypt. He worked so faithfully there that he was promoted to business manager of the Egyptian's entire estate. He was so faithful that his master did not know how much money he had; only Joseph knew. The record of Joseph shows us three principles which show God's attitude toward our faithfulness in our work.

God is with the faithful worker. *“The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man”* (verse 2). Perhaps Joseph discovered what the psalmist David later wrote, *“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved”* (Psalm 16:8). The most degrading task has a halo of glory when you remember that God is

there seeing, helping, and approving as you do your work to the best of your ability.

When Moses reached the end of his strength and was all but ready to give up, He received this encouragement from the Lord: *“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:14). With that assurance Moses took heart and continued for years in his assigned work.

Keep the sense of God's presence as you do your work. Your task may be dull and depressing; it may be difficult and demanding; but it is hallowed by the presence of the divine. Awake in the morning and thank God that you are able to go to work and that He is going with you. Then do the tasks of the day knowing that *“ye serve the Lord Christ”* (Colossians 3:24). God goes to work with you. Rejoice!

God promotes the faithful worker (verses 3-5). Potiphar took note that Joseph had God's presence and blessings upon his work. So he gave his young servant increasing responsibilities. In every enterprise Joseph was prudent and successful. Eventually, Potiphar placed Joseph over all his estate. Joseph was trusted implicitly because he had shown himself faithful. To be trusted, one must show himself trustworthy.

God promises that those who delight in the Lord will be lifted up and enjoy His blessings (Isaiah 58:14). He who has the power to put down one and set up another is constantly watching over His dear children. But promotion is dependent upon faithfulness to the task at hand. Jesus said one who was not faithful in the lesser would not be entrusted with the greater (Luke 16:10-12). Could that explain why some of God's people are promoted and some are not? God is a wise master who knows how to give to us in view of our individual abilities (Matthew 25:15). Be faithful where you are if you wish to have greater opportunities for service.

God blesses others through the faithful worker (verses 5, 6). From the moment Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his estate, the Lord increased the Egyptian's resources. There is no indication that Potiphar worshiped the Lord God. It is very possible that he followed the idolatrous worship of the Egyptians. But God blessed him because of Joseph.

God still blesses other people through His faithful saints. A faithful employee increases the profit of the company even if the owner is not a Christian. A believing wife brings the blessings of God upon a whole household. Christian citizens bring God's blessings upon a nation whose leaders may not be fully honorable. That is one way God's people are salt and light in a corrupt society. Have you seen that principle at work in your life?

God Approves of Fair Pay for Work

We hear a great deal about “equal pay for equal work.” That is a very biblical demand. Whether the work is done by male or female, black or white, there should be equity in the pay scale. On the other hand, if a person contracts for certain work at a certain price, he should do it even if he finds others are paid differently. Read Jesus' parable on that as recorded in Matthew 20:1-16.

It seems fair that payment is related to the service rendered. Jesus said, “*The labourer is worthy of his hire*” (Luke 10:7). The person who works faithfully has a right to his wages. That principle relates to all types of business. One should work for what he receives, and he should receive according to his work.

Payment should be made for all services rendered. God condemns using one's service without wages (Jeremiah 22:13; James 5:4). He warns that He will judge those who hire a person and refuse to pay him proper wages (Malachi 3:5). It behooves us to listen.

Work is a blessing, not a burden. Blessed is the person who has mental and physical ability to do productive labor. God set an example by working the six days of Creation and resting on the seventh day. We must follow His example if we wish His blessings.

Questions for discussion

1. How would you identify a “good” job?
2. How do you know that work is not a curse brought by sin?
3. How do you know that God approves honest work?
- 4; How can you do your work as if serving the Lord?