

Why Do You Work?

Work is a part of our daily human existence. From early childhood our children have work to do (chores and schoolwork). When they are old enough, we help them find a job. People go to school and college to prepare for life in the workplace, and we spend almost our entire adult life working.

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why do I work?” Do you think of work as just a necessary evil? Is it perhaps just a part of the curse of a fallen world? Do you work for the weekend, or for a vacation? What does the Bible say about work, and how does it fit into the order of God’s created world?

Here are four important biblical principles for us to keep in mind with regard to work.

1. Work is a part of God’s design for man. We shouldn’t view work as a result of sin and a part of life in a fallen world. No, already before the fall, God created Adam and Eve to work, and commanded them to “subdue” the earth and to “till” the ground (Genesis 1:28; 2:5). After man’s fall into sin, this work became more difficult due to the curse on the ground and man’s sinful resistance to God’s will for him (Genesis 3:17-19). God designed us to work, just as he created the ant to be an industrious creature (Proverbs 6:6-11), and he tells us to learn work habits from the ant, not the sloth, slug or snail.
2. One of God’s purposes for our work is that we earn money in order to feed ourselves, provide for our families and help others who are in true need because they are unable to work (Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:8). In the Bible there is an inseparable connection between work and bread, bread representing our earthly needs. In Proverbs 28:19, “He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread.” And in the New Testament, “If a man does not work, he should not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
3. The ultimate and main purpose of our work is that we do it to the glory of God. Through our work we worship. Too often we are motivated by the praise of men, earthly gain, or competition. But, man’s praise is never dependable, work doesn’t always produce earthly gain, and competition is fierce. However, when we live before God and do our work for him, then whatever we are called to do, we see as an opportunity to praise our creator (1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:23). We don’t always see his purposes, but God uses all things, including our most mundane tasks, to serve his ends. Understanding this, Joseph could work diligently as a slave in Egypt (Genesis 39). “What” we do for work is far less important than “for whom” we work.
4. God expects diligence and full effort from us in our work. He gives us the time and talents to work, and as stewards of these, we ought to do our best to his glory. In Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” Because our purpose as believers is God’s glory, we have special motivation to do our best. In Colossians 3:23, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

When we work according to these principles, we can be free from the anxiety that often goes along with work, and will learn to be content with what God has given us. “The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much” (Ecclesiastes 5:12).

We work to God’s glory, remembering that God is a working God, who uses all his power, all his wisdom, and all the resources of this universe, to work all things together for our good (Romans 8:28). We think of God’s work in the creation, his work in his providential care of his people, his work in the plan of salvation, his work in sending his own Son to die for our sins, the work that Jesus did on our behalf without wavering, the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and the work that God continues to do through the gospel to the ends of the earth. Jesus said, “My father works ... and I work” (John 5:17).

“All that I am, I owe to thee!” **Pastor Rodney Kleyn**

Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. (Proverbs 6:6)

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