

Why Should You Work?

Why Do You Work?

Recently a lawyer, who was trying to do a good job representing his client, presented the court with a not guilty plea. He told the court that it was because his client was trapped in a penny. "Excuse me?" muttered the judge.. "Yes", stated the lawyer. "It is because he is in a cent!" This past week I went to the medical clinic for a Tuberculosis test required by the school district where I work as a substitute teacher. The nursing assistant who was going to administer the test looked at my record and then asked me why I needed the test. I told her it was for my job. I assume it was because of my age, she asked me why I was still working and not retired. I laughed to myself and put her on the spot by asking her why she thought I should be retired. We both chuckled and she did the test for me. There are thousands of jobs we do each week: vacuuming, cooking, washing dishes and taking out the garbage. And then, if we are employed, there are all sorts of work tasks, and we often wonder why we have to do them. Mothers often feel oppressed by how much they have to do. Fathers feel like everything falls on them. They have to do everything. How many kids just want a break from the pressures of schoolwork? Just because you are retired doesn't mean you can't be frustrated by how much work you have to do! Many times work seems like the enemy, the hindrance to our happiness. But does that need to be the case? Can we live without work being the dark cloud overhead? Let's take a look at what can be done about the oppressive nature of work. *Our big idea today is, "Work with God and He will work with you."* The Bible provides a refreshing outlook on work and how it can bring us joy and even encourage us. Jesus Himself admitted that He was always at work and yet He never seemed oppressed by it.

When it comes to work, there is an awful lot we can learn from Jesus. He said this about the tasks before Him. **"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."** (John 4: 34 NIV) The work Jesus had, He told His disciples was food to Him. It was not a burdensome torture but rather something it sounds like, He looked forward to doing. Perhaps you are like me, you look forward to eating. Eating is not a chore for me; it is a pleasure. Eating fulfills a need for me and work seems to have been that way for Jesus. Later, after Jesus healed a crippled man in Jerusalem, He made this declaration. **"My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."** (John 5: 17b NIV) There was no let-up for Jesus. He worked alongside the Father and together they kept working. There is no hint of complaint or frustration in Jesus' words. It seems that He was glad to be doing His work. There is none of the gloominess so many have toward their work. Despite the fact that His work involved walking countless hours getting from one town to another, not having a regular place to stay, and knowing full well that His work in the end would bring about His death, Jesus expressed no regret at having to work. That is because He was working with the Father and that work was done out of love for those in His life. Keep in mind the principle of joyful work because Jesus made a practice of it. Work with God and He will work with you.

The book of Acts describes a spectacular miracle that occurred and the majesty of the miracle sometimes overshadows a key component to the account. A woman named Tabitha had died and her friends were distraught. However their desolation did not rob them of their great faith and so they sent word for the Apostle Peter to come at once. The Bible does not say that they asked specifically for Peter to call upon God to raise their friend from the dead but that seems to have been the implication. For after the grieving friends brought Peter upstairs to view the body of Tabitha, he called upon the Lord. **Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed.** (Acts 9: 40a NIV) Immediately, Peter expected the miracle to take place and he responded as one who had great faith in God. **Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.** (Acts 9: 40b NIV) Now in this, we see the work of Peter, trusting God in what he did. But consider Tabitha for a moment. She was known for this wonderful quality. Work was her opportunity to do good. **In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor.** (Acts 9: 36 NIV) When Tabitha's friends brought Peter upstairs to see Tabitha's dead body, they also made a show of the good Tabitha, or Dorcas as she was known, did. **Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.** (Acts 9: 39 NIV) This beloved woman knew how to work and enjoy her work.. She was working with God and God was working with her just as Peter was doing the same. Do you think work was a burden for either of them?

Jesus told a parable that hints at the secret to work that is a joy and not a burden. In the story there was a wealthy man who gave his servants a certain sum of money, each of them according to their abilities. One received about

\$5,000, another \$2,000 and the third \$1,000. The first two servants took what they were given and worked as if they were in a joint venture with their master, working with him. When the master returned, these two had doubled the master's investment and the master was so proud of their effort that he rewarded them abundantly. The master, in praising the effort of his employees gives us great insight into the matter of work. **"Come and share your master's happiness!"** (Matthew 25: 23c NIV) This story was told by Jesus to make a key point about your life and mine. What you have, your abilities and resources, your time and your connections are all from God. He has gifted you according to how He believes you will make use of what He gives you. Another way to put it is that God has invested in you and plans on you making the most of what you have. Notice that His reward for working hard is much more than the effort you put into it. You get to share in His happiness. Work, done in partnership with God, will bring you the abundance of happiness God Himself has. He gladly shares happiness with you as you work alongside Him and make the most of what He has given you. Do you see the principle? Work with God and He will work with you and reward you greatly for what you have done with Him.

The Apostle Paul puts the principle of work this way. **Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 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 NIV) The "whatever you do, work..." is all inclusive of any task you have to do. No bit of work falls outside the realm of working for God and not for the people it seems you are working for as you do your work. Now here is a way that you can translate this verse and it is fascinating to consider. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working **with** the Lord, and not **with** men... That gives this an entirely new consideration. Imagine you work in a hotel cleaning rooms. Of course you have a supervisor. You though are not working for that supervisor or with that supervisor, you are working for the owner of the hotel who also is cleaning rooms with you. You do not even work for the guests who reap the benefits of your effort. You work for the owner of the hotel who cleans the floors and the toilets just as you do. Remember, you and God work together, and you never do your work just by yourself. The principle of work is quite clear. Work with God and He will work with you. But there is a key component to working with God and for God that must be remembered.

Work for God and with God is always done in love. Listen to what Jesus has to say about God's workplace. **"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.** (John 15: 9-12 NIV) Work as a way of bringing love to others. When you do so, Jesus' own joy will shape the nature of your personality and make you gain His happiness in your work. Love is the missing ingredient to work that lacks joy. Just add love to your work, love for Christ and love for those you work with and those you work for and you will gain God's happiness in what you do. Start each day with this prayer. Lord, as I do my work, work with me and work through me. I dedicate each chore and task to you. Love is the missing ingredient to many workplaces and many homes where we work. We have the opportunity to each day bring God's love to the workplace and transform it by the power of God our Savior. What a wonderful upgrade that would be. The big idea. Work with God and He will work with you. No job is too menial, too boring or too troublesome if you work at it as for the Lord and He works with you as you get your work done.