

WIRED FOR WORK (THE JOURNEY – CH. 9)

Ephesians 2:10 says, “*We are God’s workmanship (masterpiece) created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*” God is at work in our world. He is always working. And this verse says his greatest work, his masterpiece, is the work He is doing in us. The purpose of this work He is doing in us is so that we will do the “good works” that He has planned for us. We call this work serving or ministry. We are ministers FOR the Lord and TO the Lord.”

For many Christians today, in our consumer-oriented, comfort-driven Christianity, tragically the attitude is not service but SERVE US! But from a Biblical perspective - it’s just common sense to serve the Lord for many reasons...

1. We are the body of Christ – every one of us, as a Christian, is a part of the body. We each have a critical role to play. When part of our physical body stops working, that’s a serious medical issue. The same is true as a member of the body of Christ. If we stop working that’s a serious spiritual issue.
2. We are the Family of God – all Christians are children of God. The simple fact is... everybody needs to do their part, everybody works – no freeloaders and no laziness.
3. We are a Spiritual Army – so do your job and be a team player.
4. We are given a Stewardship – put in charge by God of his stuff (time, talents, treasure, and our very lives). It all belongs to him and He wants us to get the most out of what He has entrusted to us. One day when Jesus returns, we will have to give an account to him and talk about what we did with his stuff while He was gone.

When Jesus had his last supper with his disciples, He took a towel and washed their feet. Because that’s what he’s all about...serving. Christianity is serving.

Now when we talk about ministry and serving the Lord, there is a fair amount of confusion and misunderstanding. So, I want to suggest that ministry is a multi-faceted endeavor which includes the following categories:

- Church ministries
- Community Outreach
- Home and Small Groups
- Lifestyle (a way of life)
- WORKPLACE!

This area of our workplace is a missing category of ministry with so many Christians – this place where we spend so much of our lives. The average American will spend about 100,000 hours at work over his lifetime.

We’re talking specifically about work, but some of you are not employed but work hard in

many different areas: school, stay-at-home parent, retired but busier than ever because of your family, and volunteer commitments, which apply to all of you.

All throughout church history Christian work has pretty much been divided into two categories, two kinds of jobs for a Christian. There have been Kingdom of God jobs (pastors, missionaries, full-time Christian workers) and all other jobs, worldly jobs. There is secular work and there is spiritual work.

Where did this originate? From a guy named Eusebeus, one of the primary Christian leaders in the 2nd Century, said in his work *The Demonstration of the Gospel*, “Christ gave ‘two ways of life’ to his church. One is the ‘perfect life’; the other is ‘permitted.’ The perfect life is spiritual, dedicated to contemplation and reserved for priests, monks, and nuns; the permitted life is secular, dedicated to action and open to such tasks as soldiering, governing, farming, trading, and raising families. Those following the permitted life have a ‘secondary grade of piety.’”

Perhaps you have heard things and/or said things that are similar to this way of thinking . . .

- *“Retired people have the best opportunity to serve the Lord, because you don’t have to work 40-50 hrs, a week.”*
- *“If we took the energy we put into work and put it into the Kingdom of God, what a difference that would make!”*
- *“He left business and went into full-time ministry.”*

For a long time it bothered me that Jesus had only three years of ministry. Why just three? I mean from age 12-30, what was that all about? Did Jesus waste most of his life? Was 90% of his life wasted? Or was it less important? Less spiritual?

Is this true? For a long time I would have said yes, but not anymore. I’m not convinced that what Jesus did at age 16, age 24, etc. was any less sacred than raising someone from the dead or teaching his disciples at 32.

I’m convinced that we need to give more attention to the significance of our work, the place we spend so much of our time and where we earn our living.

Stats – Americans and work:

- 70 % of Americans hate their jobs
- 1 in 4 American employees do their best on the job
- only only 10% are satisfied with their job

Americans believe work is a necessary evil to finance life. I have to work, so I’ll just put in my time, as little effort as possible, get it over and onto what I really want to do. TGIF, now I get to really enjoy life, it’s the weekend!

Why do we work anyway? What is God's will for our employment? Does God care? Or, does he just want us to get by, get it over with so we can get on to bigger and better things like family time, or like time serving in the church family.

Well God does care, a lot! For the Christian it should be: TGIM...THANK GOD IT'S MONDAY!

He wants us to discover, or perhaps rediscover, the life of Jesus at work - Jesus on the job – how would Jesus think and act if He were in my shoes, doing my job?

Some people believe that work was a curse from God because of the sin/fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Not so. Before they sinned we read that work existed.

In *Genesis 2:15* it says - *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

Most Christians don't see their work as spiritual. But the bottom line is, for the Christian work is sacred, a very spiritual act!

Big Idea: Every Christian is wired for work and can fulfill God's job description on the job by understanding the three different kinds of Christian workers and striving to be example number three.

❖ Three Kinds of Christian Workers

1. Poor Example of Jesus on the Job

Everyone has a bad day or bad week. When this happens we should confess it to God, apologize to others, improve and grow. This is not talking about that. This is talking about the person who says he is a Christian, but has a continual pattern of...

Overall Disobedience to the Word:

- **Talk** - profanity/filthy mouth, critical/negative, gossip, cut downs, etc.
- **Attitude** - grouchy, moody, negative, "on-edge", insensitive, impatient, not kind, proud/stubborn/not teachable, always blaming others
- **Not Trustworthy** - dishonest (lying, stealing, not keeping your word)
- **Lousy Work Ethic** - laziness, procrastination, tardiness
- **Not a Team Player** - divisive, insubordinate, disloyal, self-oriented
- Overall **Bad Example** - how they live their lives

I can't tell you how many times I've heard someone say, "That guy's a Christian? - you'd never know it by how he acts at work, school, etc.!"

Sometimes even committed Christians can be the worst workers because they're so divided in their thinking. They can't wait to get off work so they can go do "real ministry". They may

take many personal calls at work about church stuff, etc. and don't give their best on the job.

Proverbs 18:9 - One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.

2. Good Example of Jesus on the Job

When you read about slavery in the New Testament, don't think in terms of pre-Civil War slavery. Slavery in that day looked more like today's employer/employee relationships. Slaves were employees who did work for their masters. It was a widespread form of employment and the entire Roman Empire depended on it.

Eph 6:5-9 - Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 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. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he's slave or free. Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Col 3:17 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Col 3:22-24 - Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It's the Lord Christ you are serving.

Let's break down what this means, to be a **Good Example of Jesus on the Job**, into important categories:

- **Do the Job Completely:** (*Obey your earthly masters in everything, Col. 3:22*) Do both, the things we like to do, and what we don't like to do. We should do whatever we are asked to do, with the exception that it violates the Word of God.
- **Do the Job Wholeheartedly:** (*Serve wholeheartedly with excellence, totally into it – focused, with all your heart, Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:17,23*) not halfhearted -not one person when the boss is looking and another when he is gone - no hypocrisy! Be genuine and honest (*whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. - Ecc. 9:10*)
- **Do the Job Thankfully:** (*With thanksgiving, Col. 3:17*) for the job, income, abilities (many are not physically, or mentally able to work), place God has me.
- **Good Reputation, Responsible, Dependable, Team Player, Good with People.** Ask your boss, "How am I doing?" **The Three "C's":** Competence – Get the best training and skills possible. Keep improving, growing the importance of education, etc.

Character – Your track record...trust, credibility, values, motives, etc

Caring – success of others, their interests, needs, give credit, encouragement, praise, honesty. Work is simply a delivery system to love others.

Proverbs 22:29 - Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings

Many believers are in this #2 category, but there is more potential.

3. **Best Example of Working and Living for Jesus on the Job**

This should be our attitude: To experience God and glorify Him to the max in every vocation. We seek to serve Him and give Him glory in every job.

The description of this kind of Christian worker is, of course, all of category 2, but with the addition of the following:

My Main Boss is Jesus – *Read Col. 3:22-25 – Working for the Lord, it is (really) the Lord you are serving...*slaves of Christ, serving the Lord. This one truth alone can totally change your perspective and bring a revival in your heart about work. What this means is that our tasks (job description) come from God. This makes the most menial, undesirable and lowly job significant. In fact, we should be doing the jobs no one else wants to do, because we have total motivation to do it for God. When we realize this truth, we become the best workers on the planet. We have all the motivation and significance we need.

My Big Paycheck is in the Future – *Eph. 6:8 – ...the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does. Col 3:24 – ...you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.*

My Work is Worship – Now since I'm working for God, it's actually worship. Worship is not just church services and singing songs. *Col. 3:22 – ...but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Col. 3:17 – ...do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

Love God – The motive for all we do at work is to show our love for God. It is not the job; it is the motivation of our hearts. It is a constant awareness of Him and conversation with Him.

Love People – Care about what's best for them. Treat people like you want to be treated. Business is all about loving people, We often think in terms of sales, quotas, profits, production, cost controls, etc. This misses the main point and the high-purpose adventure of loving people – customers, employees, community.

My Work is Ministry – *Serving the Lord, Ephesians 6:5-9; working for the Lord, Colossians 3:22-25. It's really the Lord you are working for.*

Some of the vocabulary in church today is misleading. For example, the term "ministry" is often used only for pastors, missionaries, and full-time paid Christian workers. It's more correct and biblical, however, to say all Christians are in full-time ministry.

My Work is a Calling – This is where God has placed me, perhaps for a few more weeks, or for the rest of my career. I'm called to this vocation, just as missionaries or pastors are called to theirs. The Lord called me into business, teaching, medicine, etc.

Let's be God's people right where we are. 1 Cor. 7:20-24 – bloom where you are planted. All jobs are sacred even though they may seem menial, alone, insignificant. No occupation is more spiritual than any other. What makes a job spiritual is the heart of the Christian employee.

My Work is a Mission Field – One of the greatest mission fields in the world is the workplace. The reason is this is where God has placed the most missionaries. Christians are on the job for more hours than anything else in their week. What a great place to be a powerful witness for Christ. So, be bold and courageous. Be sure to use the BRIDGES prayer tool and apply the Prayer/Care/Share lifestyle with your work associates, customers, students, etc. Pray for open doors and boldness in sharing the Lord.