



A People Who Work Well

Ephesians 6: 5-9

What does it mean for you to work as a “bondservant of Christ”?

1. Your work is worship

If you're in full-time employment, between 30 and 40% of your waking hours are spent at work, that's over a third of your life! Being a Christian is to give your whole life to Jesus. So your work is not your own, it's worship to the one who made you, who gave you all of your gifts and talents, and who gave you the work to do in the first place.

“Avad” = Hebrew word for ‘work’ also means ‘worship’.

2. You work for the family business

Our God is a God who works.

It's easy to think of work as an interruption to your life; a necessary evil that everyone has to do. The Bible talks about work right from the very first chapter. God works to create the heavens and the earth; He even found delight in His own work (“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”). All work is inherently dignified because God designed it and He does it. When the Son of God came to the earth He created, He came as a carpenter.

Our God is a God who works, and you are made in His image.

God commanded Adam and Eve to “fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion” over it. That is, to fill the earth with community, creativity, and construction; to investigate, discover, develop and care for the world's resources.

Before sin entered the world, work was part of God's perfect design. Although we now live in a fallen world, and sin makes work difficult and frustrating at times, the commission God gave Adam and Eve in the garden still applies to us.

"Through our work we bring order out of chaos, create new entities, exploit the patterns of creation, and interweave the human community. So whether splicing the human gene or doing brain surgery or collecting the rubbish or painting a picture, our work further develops, maintains, or repairs the fabric of the world. In this way, we connect our work to God's work." (Tim Keller)

He has commissioned you to work not only as his fellow worker but also as His child (Ephesians 1:5). You work for the family business because you are an important, trusted member of God's family. We share in our Father's work, partnering with Him to bless the world around us.

3. Your work doesn't define you, Jesus does

If work is about worshipping Christ, that means it's no longer all about you and your career! This frees you from the world's pressure to find your fulfilment and your identity in your work.

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul tells followers of Jesus that your identity is not found in your work. Because you are a child of God himself (1:5), saved through His grace (2:8), secure in His love (2:4), completely known by the God who created all things (2:10), chosen to live in His purposes (1:11), and that even now you're seated in heavenly realms with Him (2:6), and that you're the dwelling place of His Spirit (2:22). Even after the hardest, longest, or most frustrating day of work, you're still a chosen child of God. The true Gospel of grace frees us from having to prove ourselves and secure our identity through our work. All work now becomes a way to love the God who saved us freely.

4. You have the best boss imaginable

Knowing who you work for changes your attitude to your work. Ephesians 6 reveals who your real boss is! Everything you do in obedience to your earthly boss is actually service to your ultimate master, Jesus. And He is perfectly just, perfectly fair and infinitely generous.

Your Heavenly Father knows your limitations, which is why He has commanded you to rest, regularly! He doesn't have unrealistic expectations for you. He designed you, and though you are designed to work, you're not designed to work constantly. Rest well!

While you're working, God is at work in you. He wants to grow you in your faith and your character, and He uses the challenges you face at work to do that. When you submit this daily grind to God in faith, it becomes a powerful instrument to change you and make you more like Jesus. This is a sure sign of God's fatherly love for you.

5. You are His representative in your workplace

We're not saved by good works, but the book of Ephesians tells us that we are saved to do good works (see Ephesians 2:8-10). As a Christian, you now carry the Spirit of God in you wherever you go, which means the character of Jesus will spill out into your work.

Matthew 5:16, "*Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*"

You are an ambassador for the Gospel, and you can be sure that faithful obedience to Christ in your conduct will be noticed by those around you. By demonstrating the Gospel through deeds and words at work, you can point the way to salvation and eternal life for your co-workers.

For managers/employers (verse 9): Paul emphasises the submission of masters just as he did with bondservants. In your work, you too are really serving Jesus. However high up you are in the company, we read earlier in Paul's letter that Jesus is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion" (Ephesians 1:21). So, submit to Him and reflect Him to all those who work for you, treating everyone with kindness and dignity. Jesus Himself was the ultimate model of servant leadership that all masters are to imitate. He said, "I did not come to be served, but to serve."

6. You are to work with eternity in mind

In our passage, Paul helps us to see that though you may not see all the fruit of your labour in this life, all our work will be rewarded in the one to come (verse 8).

Your employer might not always compensate you fairly, but God sees and rewards every action done in service to Him. It's costly in the short term to keep working

diligently even when no-one seems to notice. It takes faith to live and work this way, but you can be confident that working for God has consequences that echo into eternity.

Questions:

- Have you ever thought of your work as something God cares deeply about?
 - Do you see your work as your own? Why is it important to see it as worship to God?
 - ‘Our God is a God who works’: How should this change the way we see our work?
 - How does ‘knowing who our real boss is’ keep us from becoming anxious or over-worked?
 - Do you work with eternity in mind?
 - Pray for one another to be filled with the Holy Spirit so we might have God’s perspective on our work, and so we can represent Christ well in our workplaces.
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