

2. Do you work six days and rest on the seventh? Write down anything you did on your last day of rest that you could have done on another day which would have then made the rest day more refreshing.
3. Christians have tended to keep Sunday as a day for worship and refreshment. Are your Sundays so busy that they cannot be described as days of rest? How much time do you really give to worship on that day?
4. The Jews at the time of Jesus had surrounded the keeping of the Sabbath with many rules and regulations. In Mark 2:23-27 the Pharisees thought the disciples were reaping, an activity of work forbidden in Exodus 34:21. How did Jesus respond to such a rigid approach?
5. How far is your day of rest so wrapped up in rules that it has ceased to be of benefit to you?

Weekend

1. Jesus worked as a carpenter; Paul as a tentmaker. But both, at times, were supported by others. In 2 Thessalonians 3 we saw how Paul described this right. He elaborated on the principle that a Christian worker should be materially rewarded in 1 Corinthians 9:1-15. How would you summarize this principle?
2. If you are not now in full-time employment, find a Christian more mature than yourself who has a job and discuss with them what you have studied this week.
3. For further reading, John Staff is excellent on this subject in chapter 9 'Issues Facing Christians Today' (Marshalls).

Notes



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Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes

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Week 50: Work (A topic study)

'Work is a consequence of our creation in the image of God and not a consequence of our fall'.

John Stott

Work need not be drudgery, a necessary evil so that we can enjoy our leisure time! The Bible encourages a positive attitude to work, contrary to the expectations prevalent in our society. In the first study we shall establish a biblical framework for our attitude to work. We shall then examine some practical implications.

Day 1. A necessary evil?

Genesis 1 - 3; Exodus 35: 30-35

Skim read Genesis 1 - 3.

1. What evidence is there that God himself is a worker, finding satisfaction in his work?
2. How far did God make man to be a worker like himself? Does man work on God's behalf?
3. What do we read here about frustration in work?
4. From these verses, what strikes you as being different about the Bible's view of work and that of the world around? How far have you adopted our society's negative view of work?
5. Since God has intended us to work and has enabled us to do so, we have a responsibility to work to the best of our ability. Read Exodus 35:30-35 and see how Moses viewed the way God equipped men as craftsmen. Do you have the same attitude to the use of your gifts as they had to theirs?

Day 2. Not on the scrap-heap

Romans 12:1-13

'I have become a statistic ... I am unemployed!'

We need to draw a distinction between work and employment. Because someone is out of paid employment does not mean that they are unable to work, are not working, or are valueless. Within the church, all members belong and have something to contribute, and this is the true pattern of society. Read Romans 12:1-8, noting down the different ways an individual Christian should think of himself and his contribution to others. As a contrast, think how the 'pattern of this world' differs from this, for example, encouraging conformity, self-absorption, independence from others.

1. Where do your gifts lie? (A leader in your church, or a trusted friend, may help you to identify your contribution.)
2. Confronted by unemployment, how could this passage help you find value and a contribution in the church? How does it help you in your relationship to your society?
3. Depression and fatalism often descend on someone who is unemployed. Material need may certainly exist. Read Romans 12:9-13 to see how Paul was urging the church in Rome to help those in need. If you are in paid employment think of someone you know who is unemployed. Then think over each of these phrases with them in mind, e.g. how sincere is your love, your prayer, your hospitality?

Day 3. Drudgery and idleness

Genesis 3:17-24; Colossians 3:22-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15

It may be that you are in a job with little job satisfaction, and you may feel powerless to do anything about it.

1. Read again Genesis 3:17-24. Contrast that with the fruitfulness in work promised in Genesis 1:28. We need not be overcome by the sin in the world.
2. Turn to Colossians 3:22-24. Summarize Paul's advice to slaves in Colossae. How would your attitude change if you consciously applied verse 23 to your work situation? If this is outside of your experience there is maybe someone you know in such a job who would welcome your prayerful interest and support.
3. The Bible also says something about those who simply refuse to work. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 noting down everything Paul says about those who will not work. What effect were they having on the church? How were such people to be treated? Does this have any relevance to your church?

Note: The word for 'idleness' Paul used here is not 'laziness' but 'a refusal to work where work is expected'.

Paul set a good example to the Thessalonians. Pray that the leaders of your church might be good examples of a Christlike attitude to work.

Day 4. Daniel - God's man at work

Daniel 5 and 6

Some Christians make a false division between Christian and secular work, even having a double standard of behaviour - one for work, one for home and church. Daniel made no such division. In this study we shall look at various ways in which he approached his work as a high official serving a pagan king in Babylon. You could refer back to your studies in week 44.

1. Reading Daniel 5, what reputation had Daniel built up? Upon what was this founded? Is there any evidence that the power and wealth lavished on him had gone to his head?
2. In no way had God's name been dishonoured by Daniel's behaviour. Is the quality of your work such that God's name is honoured? Pray for any Christians who are in positions of power, that they will continue to be dependent on God. No man of God is automatically immune from making enemies.
3. Read Daniel 6:1-23. Why did Daniel have enemies? As a final resort how did they attempt to bring about his downfall? What was Daniel's response?
4. Is it obvious to others at work that you are a Christian? Some Christians are ridiculed at work because of their faith, the high quality of their work or their moral standards. (A few Christians seem to invite ridicule by being particularly awkward!) What encouragement from Daniel's life is there for those in such a position?

In the light of this pray for yourself (if relevant) and other Christians who have unwillingly made enemies at work.

Day 5. All work and no play?

Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:23-27

A ten-day working week has been tried and has failed. From the beginning God laid down a human pattern for work and rest.

1. Read Genesis 2:2-3, then Exodus 20:8-11 to refresh your memory about this pattern. Why did God intend man to rest?