

# How Can We Honor God Through Our Jobs?

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Have you ever thought about the work that you do from God’s perspective? Unless you’re blessed to be doing your “dream job,” most Monday mornings you’d rather turn over in your bed and sleep a few extra hours rather than get up and get ready for work. But is that how God wants us to view our daily responsibilities? What does the Bible say about our work?

We find God’s original plan for work in the first two chapters of Genesis. God set the example as He performed His own work of creation. With infinite detail and wisdom, He spent six days creating everything needed to sustain life for the animals and human beings that would populate the earth. “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His **work** which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His **work** which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His **work** which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:1-3).



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## Why Is Work Often Burdensome?

God then put [Adam and Eve](#) in the garden He had created and gave them their first work assignment. They were to cultivate (work, labor) and keep (preserve, protect) the garden ([Genesis 2:15](#)). God intended man to work for his living, even in the perfect, unspoiled environment of Eden. In this sinless environment, work was a blessing – a grateful response to the bountiful provision of what God had given them. They were not simply to take what they needed without thought; they were to maintain it and work so that it would continue to produce.

We could define work from a biblical perspective as **cultivating what God has given us so that it provides for our needs and continues to grow.**

We also see in this first example the *rhythm* God established for our work: six days of labor followed by a seventh day of rest. Many years would pass before God included a Sabbath rest in the laws given to Moses. Taking one day each week away from our work is not only a religious or [faith](#)-centered practice. It was established by God's own example and given to Adam as a blessing after a week of work.

After Adam and Eve sinned, their work became less a joyous response to God's blessing and more toil and labor to survive.

“Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return” ([Genesis 3:17b-19](#)).

If you wonder why your flesh rebels against work, this is why. Now, instead of the earth easily producing what we need to eat and live, we have to wrestle against the curse.



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**Who Should Work, and Why?**

Aside from the most obvious reasons (we like to eat, have clothes to wear, and a roof over our heads), God’s Word gives us insight into why all of us should be willing to work. If work is a response to what God has given us (physical health, [strength](#), skills, education, wisdom, knowledge, talents, hopes, dreams, experiences, and ideas), we are obligated to make good use of it. But for what purpose?

Paul taught the believers at Thessalonica about work when he urged them “to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need” ([1 Thessalonians 4:10b-12](#)). He made it clear that those who were not willing to work did not deserve to even eat, and that it was wrong to waste our days on unproductive things, expecting others to provide for our needs.

[2 Thessalonians 3:10-12](#) – “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

Not only are we to work to provide for the needs of ourselves and our families, but we are also to work hard so that we can share with those in need ([Ephesians 4:28](#)). Jesus taught his disciples that the poor will always be among us ([Mark 14:7](#)). True religion considers the needs of the widow and orphan ([James 1:27](#)), but even widows who were able to work were excluded from being put on the “list” for help, and especially if they spent their days in pleasure rather than godly pursuits and helping their own families ([1 Timothy 5:5-10](#)).

God is not saying that all pleasure is wrong, or that we should only focus on work, but that individuals – no matter what their age, social status, or circumstance – should be willing to work and contribute, for the good of all. We are to take personal responsibility, to the best of our ability. In God’s economy, there is enough provision for all, when all who are able are willing to work.



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## How Should We Work?

The [Bible](#) is full of wisdom for workers. Proverbs, especially, gives practical advice that leads to a productive life. Those who are lax in their work will become poor, but those who are diligent will prosper ([Proverbs 10:4](#)). A person who is slack or negligent in his work may think he is not hurting anyone, but [Proverbs 18:9](#) warns that laziness on the job is the same as willingly or intentionally destroying our employer's place of business.

Those who are diligent in their work will be promoted and honored according to [Proverbs 12:24](#), but a lazy person will find himself in "forced labor." In other words, if we work diligently, we can advance, but if we are undisciplined and lazy, we will never move ahead; we will be forced to take unfulfilling, menial jobs that barely pay our bills. All of us have had to perform work that was unrewarding for a time as we gained experience, and all work is profitable, but our work ethic has a great deal of influence on our ability to advance and provide for our families. As [Proverbs 14:23](#) says, "mere talk leads only to poverty."

Just as the Bible warns against being a lazy worker, it also addresses over-working. In our culture, we call this person a "workaholic." They can never really rest or step away from their work; they invest all their energy into their job to the exclusion of enjoying the relationships in their lives or taking advantage of the pleasurable things their work enables them to have.

The writer of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon, learned this lesson by experience. He warns against allowing the love of money and things to consume us and encourages us to instead take time to enjoy the fruit of our labor ([Ecclesiastes 5:10-20](#)). After all, when we die, we will take none of the things we've accumulated with us! As God demonstrated in the week of Creation, we are to work diligently, but also take time to rest, trusting that He will accomplish all that needs to be done if we are faithful to Him.

[Psalm 127:1-2](#) – "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep."

## What Kind of Work Should We Do?

The joy of work that was lost in the [Garden of Eden](#) can be redeemed in Christ, just as our souls are redeemed. This happens when we start to see our work through the lens of God's greater kingdom purposes. This perspective impacts our choices as we decide what kind of work to pursue.

There is a difference between honorable and dishonorable work, and it is not based on how menial the task is, nor how educated or skilled one must be to perform the work. Instead, our question should always be, “Am I able to honor God in this job?” There may be times when we have to turn down a promotion or walk away from a job, trusting that God will honor us in return and provide a place of work where we can bring Him glory.

[Psalm 90:17](#) – “Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; and confirm for us the work of our hands; yes, confirm the work of our hands.”

[Proverbs 16:2-3](#) – “All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives. Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.”



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## What Should Be Our Attitude Toward Work?

If we only see work as something that *must* be done in order to live, it will be drudgery to us. We will spend our years of productive labor looking forward to the day we can retire and miss the greater joy and purpose that God can give us in the midst of our work. A friend of mine once said that her job was simply a scaffolding that she stood upon to do the greater work of serving God. It did not matter so much what her daily duties consisted of; the more important factor was finding the valuable, eternal purpose that God had for her in the mundane.

Paul exemplified this attitude as he willingly worked as a tentmaker to provide for his own physical needs, even as his greater calling was to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tentmaking paid his bills, but his job was to be an ambassador for Christ.

[Acts 18:2-4](#) – “And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and

they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.”

Paul learned this attitude from Jesus. After Jesus multiplied the five loaves and two fish, the crowds pursued Him, not for kingdom purposes, but for the free bread. Jesus admonished them, “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the [Son of Man](#) will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal” ([John 6:27](#)). In other words, physical provision is necessary, but it is not the most important thing. The greater goal is following and serving Jesus Himself.

What a difference it makes if we see our daily work as a platform for bringing glory to God, and not just as a way of increasing our portfolio or making our temporary lives on earth more comfortable. How would it change your attitude to see each day as an opportunity not only to bless your boss by giving him or her a full day’s productivity, but as a means of furthering the gospel by your words, attitude, and testimony of the goodness and mercy of God? How meaningful would your work become, if you understood that God was your real boss, and the company you work for is the kingdom of God?

[Colossians 3:22-24](#) – “Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

[1 Corinthians 10:31](#) – “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

[1 Corinthians 15:58](#) – “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”