

WORK

“to subdue and to rule”

Key question

What should be the rules of the game for a disciple of Christ in a capitalistic, free enterprise economic system? Being made in God’s image?

Key text

Galatians 6:9

“And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary.”

Introduction:

1. “The most critical element for a healthy work environment or any other environment is trust. ... Trust is composed of two elements, competence and keeping commitments. This again becomes a belief based on observation of your actions, not words. Simply put, “do you do what you say you will do.” David G. Rohlander, Business Life Magazine
2. “Business leaders have sometimes exploited workers, deceived customers, damaged the environment, and tried to manipulate family life, political power, and religion for gain.” Max Stackhouse, On Moral Business
3. “The four-way test for things we think, say, and do: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build good will and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Rotary International

Key texts

- “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1:28
- “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” Genesis 2:15
- “Cursed in the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground,” Genesis 3:17-19
- “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” Gen.2:2-3

- “six days you shall labor and do all your work but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work,” Ex.20:9-10
- “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.” Ecclesiastes 5:18-19
- “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” Colossians 3:17
- “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 is slave or free.” Ephesians 6:5-8
- “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example; because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat any one’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example. For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order; ‘If anyone will not work, neither let him eat.’ 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 a quiet fashion and eat their own bread.” II Thessalonians 3:6-12
- “But if any one does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.” I Timothy 5:8
- “Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?” I Corinthians 9:6

A. **The terms we use to describe what we do may reveal our perspective.**

1. **Career** - something you build as a monument to your significance.
2. **Job** - a general duty you have to perform that is a pain in the neck.
3. **Work** - what you do to get the job done.
4. **Profession** - a skill related activity recognized as a necessary part of society, expressed in a long-term job that provides for our material needs.
5. **Labor** - hard work.
6. **Occupation** - something you have to do to make a living.
7. **Vocation** - a chosen field of activity that uses your skills and energy to make a living.
8. **Trade** - a blue collar profession.
9. **Calling** - a God ordained purpose.

B. **There are three problematic views of work held by Christians.**

1. **Career** - Work takes on a self-serving Messianic role.
 - a. The ultimate purpose of work is to fulfill self.
 - b. Success in life means success in work.
 - c. You can tell how successful someone is by his material wealth, his professional recognition, or his postional status.
 - d. You've got to do whatever it takes to get the job done.
 - e. Evaluation
 1. The secular view of work expects more of work and self than work and self can deliver.
 2. The secular view of work tends to make an idol of career.
 3. The secular view of work leaves God out of its system.
2. **Curse** - Work is hard labor to be avoided if possible.
 - a. God is more interested in the soul than in the body.
 - b. The things of eternity are more important than the things of time.
 - c. Life divides into two categories, the sacred and the secular.
 - d. Because of the nature of their work, ministers and other clergy are more important to God's program than the laity.
 - e. "I just go to work to earn a living."
 - f. Evaluation:
 1. The Biblical notion of "soul" is best understood as "the whole person" or "being" as opposed to something distinct and contrasted to the body.
 2. The temporal and eternal come together in the great commandment where loving my neighbor is a call to temporal matters according to James 2.
 3. All of life is related to God. The notion of sacred - secular can be misleading. God's providence and sustenance apply to both the natural and supernatural realms.
 4. As a nation of priests we are all called as members of the body of Christ to function as a team.
3. **Calling** - Work (vocation) as a sacred and ordained activity.
 - a. We are to look at our vocation as a calling from God and treat it as a sacred ministry.
 1. This notion of work as a sacred calling came out of the reformation and was the basis of the "Protestant work ethic" that had a great influence on early American culture.
 2. It was a reaction to the spiritual class system created within the Roman Catholic Church where the clergy had the noble profession while all others worked as a part of the carnal world. The dichotomy between spiritual and material worlds was often over-played and wrongly applied by the early church.
 - d. Evaluation:
 - The notion of work per say is ordained of God and in that sense we are all called to work and be responsibly productive.
 - The N.T. seems to know little if anything of a view of vocation as calling. All references to "calling" in the N.T. refer to something other than vocational work.
 - 3. Paul's work as a tent maker seems to have been little more than support for his preaching ministry.

C. The four great mandates of the Christian life

Cultural mandate	Commission mandate	Charismatic mandate	Character mandate
“care for the creation” Gen.1	“build the bride of Christ” Matt.28, Eph.4	“exercise spiritual gifts” Rom.12, I Cor.12	“become Christ like” Rom.6, Eph.4
Mentioned only in Genesis 2	The emphasis of the Bible		
This is the area that is often associated with vocation.	This is the area that is often associated with ministry as a way of life.		

D. Lessons

1. Work is ordained of God. A part of sharing God’s image means that we work because He also worked (Gen.1-2).
2. Work is frustrating in a fallen world. Sin has made hard labor or work (Gen.3).
3. Work is an arena where we live out four mandates.
 - a. We tend the earth.
 - b. We provide for the general welfare of society.
 - c. We display personal character that witnesses to God’s call to selfless service.
 - d. We provide for our basic physical needs and those of our family.
4. Vocations are not anointed, sacred, or ordained but the worker is.
5. Why and how we work is more important than what we do and where we do it.

E. The cultural shift that set the stage for our present confusion.

Reality is objective.		Reality is subjective.	
A universal moral order exists.		There is no universal moral order.	
God centered	Man centered		
Pre-modernism (The Church) <i>Martin Luther</i> 0-1750	Early Modernism (Common sense) <i>Thomas Jefferson</i> 1750-1850	Late Modernism (Scientism) <i>Carl Sagan</i> 1850-1950	Post modernism (Personal preference) <i>Jacques Derrida</i> 1950-2000?
GOD <u>man</u> cosmos	God MAN cosmos	MAN god cosmos	? man chaos

The traditional American mind set		<i>The modern American mind set</i>	
25% of population largely conservative Christian	25% of population largely sympathetic to Biblical values	25% of population largely unsympathetic to Biblical values	25% of population largely cultural leaders and hostile to Biblical values
Self-sacrifice is an expression of worship.	Self-sacrifice is a means of happiness.	Self-sacrifice is a necessary evil.	Self-sacrifice is foolish.

1. **ILLUSTRATION:** *American Demographics* magazine sites a 1997 study that labels 25% as Cultural Creative, 29% as Traditionalist, and 47% as Modernists.
2. The industrial revolution (1780-1830) brought a dramatic change in the way American's related to "work" and "vocation."

Pre – Industrial revolution	Post – Industrial revolution
The home and family are the centers of work	<i>The factory and office are the centers of work</i>
Men are very involved in the raising of children and managing of the home.	Women are more involved in the raising of children and managing of the home.
Men were expected to sacrifice for the common good.	<i>Men were expected to compete with others out of self- interest.</i>
Personal passions (self-interests) were discouraged in men.	<i>Personal passions (self-interests) were encouraged in men.</i>

F. **The Protestant Work ethic**

1. Max Weber published in 1904 "*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*" His thesis: Calvinistic Protestantism promoted the rise of modern capitalism by encouraging faith and good works as a sign of election and by promoting education of all people so that they could read the Bible and be productive for the Kingdom of God on earth.
2. Basic tenants:
 - Hard work is a virtue and a sacred calling.
 - Honesty and good faith build cooperative communities.
 - Seriousness in all that we do is a form of worship.
 - Thrift in use of money and time is a sign of dedication.
 - Productivity and profit are natural byproducts of virtue and work.

3. The Puritan work ethic differed from the Roman Catholic view in two ways.
 - a. While wealth may free a Catholic to a life of leisure and rest, the Puritans saw this life as a place for serious, diligence in proving ones election no matter how wealthy a person might be. The next life and the Sabbath were the only resting points. Pleasure and leasure were suspect, suffering was a virtue if done in the pursuit of holiness and productivity.
 - b. Roman Catholics viewed vocation and calling as reserved for formal Christian ministry only while the Puritans viewed all noble vocations as sacred and linked to a special divine calling.

G. The options for an ethic in our day.

1. Three parts of ethics
 - a. What is right? What does the letter of the law demand? What kind of behavior is required, forbidden, or permitted? This is the road that must be followed. Major religions generally agree on what is right and wrong – truth telling, preservation of life, etc.
 - b. What is good? What is the virtuous thing to do? What is our goal? This is the destination of our travels. Major religions have differing perceptions of the human quest or ultimate purpose.
 - c. What is fitting? What is appropriate in these times? This is how we make the trip.