

4 Road to Financial Freedom Leader Guide

Work: A Good Thing!



Introduction to the Series

- We're taking a 4-week break in our regular study for a church-wide emphasis.
- This study will be the focus in worship and in small groups (ABS & Home Groups).
- This emphasis is not an attempt by the church to raise money, but rather to equip each of us with Biblical understanding of how the Lordship of Christ affects even this component of our lives.
- Overview: 1) God Owns It All, 2) The Problem with Debt 3) Eternal Investment, 4) Our Work
- All Scripture references are NIV unless otherwise stated.

Purpose for This Lesson

1. On a knowledge level, students will learn:
 - a. that God created us to work, as we were created in His image
 - b. that we need to live balanced lives between God, work, family, rest, etc.
 - c. that our work reflects either positively or negatively on God
2. On a heart level, we want to inspire students to:
 - a. have an improved attitude toward work
 - b. be committed to integrity and intentionality in work

Discussion Questions to Create Interest

1. Have you ever watched the show *Dirty Jobs*?
2. What is the worst one you've ever had? (allow for discussion)
3. What was your attitude toward that terrible job?

(Teacher, be sure to tell one of your experiences!)

Introduction

(share this however you feel it will be best communicated... especially #4)

Today we'll be talking about work and noticeably absent will be discussions about money. Here are some of the reasons that this lesson deserves a place in a series on financial freedom.

1. By God's design, work is the primary source of our income.
2. Correct attitudes resulting in correct actions that are based on biblical principles will usually result in financial improvement. That's why even the Chinese government recently spoke in favor of their society needing Judeo-Christian values. Now they want nothing to do with Jesus, the source of those values, but they recognize that a society practicing biblical values is a good thing for an economy.
3. God blesses integrity. When we do things His way and rely on Him, He will meet our needs.
4. (An maybe the most important) Many people struggle financially because they lack an understanding of the truths contained in this lesson, primarily a correct attitude and understanding of God's perspective on work. *Getting this right is critical to the financial freedom of any individual or family!*

Focus Scripture: Colossians 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 that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

We won't get into the slavery issue today, but there are definitely some similarities in the master-slave relationship and the employer-employee relationship. Although sometimes we may feel we work for a slave-driver, today's masters hold a little less over our heads than in New Testament times or even during the Civil War era.

Question: If we were going to draw some truths from this passage that translate into today's culture, what would they be? (Allow for response.)

Suggested answers: (I found a 4 point sermon! The words will help you categorize their answers and not repeat.)

1. Obedience - We should be willing to obey our boss, unless what they are asking is immoral or unethical.
2. Observation - We should work as hard when the boss isn't watching as we do when they are.
3. Output - We should give work our best -- work hard, as if we are doing it for God.
4. Outcome - We will receive our reward from God. (So in essence, the boss is always watching!)

Speaking of hard work and laziness...

Funny Quote: (Insert the name of a class member in the blank)
_____ once told me that "Laziness is nothing more than the habit of resting before you get tired." (actually a quote by Jules Renard)

Scripture's Perspective on Work

1. We are created in God's **image**, and Scripture shows God to be a worker.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26

He rested on the 7th day.

Colossians 1:17 seems to say God through Christ is still at work holding the universe together. *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Men and women are fulfilled when we are functioning according to design. If material things had emotions, a radio would be happy when it plays music; a car would be happy going down the road, and a pen would be happy putting words on paper. These things were created with a purpose and so were we. Since we are made by God, we are most content when we are doing what he designed us to do.

As further evidence, we know of many lottery winners whose lives have been ruined by winning the lottery. Many factors were involved, but for one, when people quit doing something productive, life loses meaning. (I found entire web sites dedicated to the sad stories. I was going to share one, but the first two involved deaths and suicides, and I just didn't want to go that far with it.)

(Clarify here that the tasks of a "stay-at-home" mom are just as important and as much or more work as being in the work place. There were times when I had the opportunity to stay home with young children. Give me the work place any time!)

2. Work is God's plan for us to **provide** for our families.

Work is tied with life-necessities in Scripture:

We gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10

And another scripture:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Gen 2:15

Even before the Fall, when sin entered the human race, God instituted work. The very first thing the Lord did with Adam was to assign him work. Despite what many have come to think, work was initiated for our benefit in the sinless environment of the Garden of Eden. After the Fall, work was made more difficult with the "curse of the ground." Man had to now deal with weeds and thorns, so the work was much more difficult.

Question: Does your work place seem pre- or post-Fall?

Remember that God promises to provide for our needs, but it is not his design to distribute wealth evenly.

3. We need to find the **balance** between laziness and “workaholism”. Neither is healthy.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15-16

Questions: 1. What’s wrong with laziness if you can get away with it?
2. What’s wrong with workaholism? (consequences)
3. What causes someone to be a workaholic?

A good book on learning to balance is Andy Stanley’s *Choosing to Cheat* as well as the Henry Cloud book entitled *Boundaries*.

Question: Have any of you read and benefited from one of these books?

4. Life needs to include adequate **time** for work, sleep, family, relationships and recreation. (God is included in “relationships.”)

We should order our priorities to include the things that are most important to us. Time gets away, just like our money. We can be disciplined or just watch life go by.

Question: How have some of you prioritized? Any tips?
(Setting boundaries, scheduling time, learning to say “no”)

Sometimes the most holy thing you can do is to take a nap!

Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest. Exodus 34:21

Isn’t it good to know that God cares about rest and relaxation?

Question: Are you careful to observe the Sabbath? Why do you think God designed a sabbath?

5. Our trust in God should keep us from **over**-allegiance to work due to fear of losing our job.

Sometimes we allow a job or a boss to be a slave-driver. We may have fear of losing the job and being out of work. This can cause us to neglect other important parts of life.

And why do you worry about clothes? O you of little faith? do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6:28-34

Seeking wealth can also cause us to be over-committed to work.

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Prov 23:4

Now for the other perspective... good work ethic.

6. We owe it to both God and our employer to be **productive** when we are “on the clock”.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. Ecclesiastes 9:10

Most believers would not dream of stealing something that belonged to the company. Nor would we sign a contract and intentionally break it.

To not give our best at work is the equivalent of stealing.

My (Jay's) father used to say, “When someone hires you, they are just buying your time. So it doesn't matter if you are sweeping a sidewalk, making coffee, or doing brain surgery. Give it your best.” That should help us have the right attitude toward work.

7. Our relationship with Christ should make a **significant** impact on our work.

If we are the only Bible some people read, then what do our co-workers think of Christ?

We need to realize that we are a commercial for Jesus Christ. Our lives need to be attractive to lost people! Just as TV commercials never show fat people advertising weight-loss products, we are not a good commercial for Jesus Christ if our lives aren't right.

That's an uncomfortable thing, but as believers, all of our life is under scrutiny by the world. That's a lot of pressure. Lost people aren't looking for perfection, but they'd better see something different than the way they live their life. If not, why would they desire to change?

In fact, a worse scenario would be for lost people to see a terrible work ethic in believers and say to themselves, “If that's what Christianity produces, then no thanks!”

Our Christianity should be evident in four areas at work:

1. Our commitment.
2. Our pursuit of excellence.
3. Our honesty.
4. Our relationships.

Which of these areas need improvement in our work life?

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Philippians 2:3

Question: How do we view the CEO and the janitor, both as more important than us?

According to this verse, if we treat the owner/employer, the customers, and fellow co-workers as more important than ourselves, it will help us take our commitments to each more seriously.

8. Believers should carry **Christ** into the work place.

So he (Paul) reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. Acts 17:17

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... 1 Peter 3:15

9. **Employers** have responsibilities too!

You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. You shall give him his wages (in a timely manner)... so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you. Deut 24:14-15

Question: Other than pay for work done, what other responsibilities do employers have?

Closing Thought

Let's be careful with our attitudes toward work. John Maxwell says that "Your attitude determines your altitude." We can fly high or we can fly low. Flying low is not a good witness for Christ.

We can be thankful that we have a job! When is the last time you stopped to thank God for your job. We in America have been given so much that we've developed an attitude of entitlement. We are not happy if we don't get the same bonus or more as we received last year. It is much better to see everything we're given as a gift from God and be thankful for it!

Every good and perfect gift is from above... James 1:17

1. Questions for Thought & Application

- In what ways do we have an attitude of entitlement?
- What can we do this week to glorify God in our work?
- If Jesus was watching, would we work more conscientiously? (He is!)

2. Continued Study: Homework!

Point group members to the daily assignments for continuing study. This is the back page of the Student Handout. As the lessons are brief, encourage them to spend some time every day and not to do the entire week in one day.

3. Consider challenging the class with the "Honorable Work" Commitment in the Homework Session.

My Commitment to Live a Life of

Honorable Work

In order to enjoy the full spiritual life that Christ intends, I commit to:

- See my work as God's will and provision for life.
- Set and honor priorities of God, family, work and rest.
- Seek to witness through my work and at my workplace.
- Maintain a positive attitude toward work and remain thankful for God's provision.

Signed: _____

Date: _____