

God's Principles on Work

Intro: I will never forget the first job I ever had getting paid and hourly wage. Up until that time all I was allowed to do was pick berries all summer. I was 12 years old and couldn't wait to prove to everyone I was capable of doing anything my older brother could do. Share about moving chickens.

It seems in our culture you spend all your time as a kid preparing to go to work, and then the rest of your life preparing and planning how to quit work. Work is looked upon by many as this necessary evil in this life.

- This being Labor Day weekend, what is God's perspective on work? Does He have a perspective that is a bit different than our culture's? Let's find out! I want to give you 4 Biblical principles on work

I. Work Was Created By God

A. God gave mankind a job from the beginning

Gen. 2:15 "The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it." (NLT)

1. Even in a perfect environment, God gave mankind a responsibility...a job to do. God didn't put Adam and Eve in this lush, perfect garden and tell them to just kick back and enjoy themselves. No, from the beginning they had to work.
2. The terms "tend and watch over it" implies responsibility, time investment, thinking and problem solving, consistency at doing something, repeated activity...yes, it sounds like work.
3. Work is not a result of sin entering the world. Work was part of God's perfect plan from the beginning of time. God's perfect plan for man included repeated responsibilities that needed to be fulfilled even in the Garden of Eden.
4. Work did not originate after Adam and Eve sinned as a punishment. Work was part of the perfect, pre-sin environment.

B. Work is connected to our purpose in life

1. What we see very clearly from Genesis 2-3 is that God's original purpose for mankind was for loving relationships (vertical and horizontal) and for fulfilling responsibility.
2. Many years later King Solomon commented on the value of work.

Ecc. 3:22 "So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is why we are here!..." (NLT)

3. That's right! Fulfilling responsibility and learning to take joy in that is why we're here. This may be quite surprising to many of you. You may be thinking; Why would this be a purpose? I can't wait until I can quit work?
4. When we work and fulfill responsibility, we are reflecting the character of God. We

are acting like the One who made us. God is not idle. God is a worker. God is active. God is constantly fulfilling responsibility.

Phil. 2:13 “For God is working in you...” (NLT)

I Cor. 12:6 “God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.” (NLT)

Eph. 3:20 “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.” (NLT) We serve a working, active God

5. Fulfilling our jobs; being responsible and embracing work and doing it well is acting like God. Work is a reflection of His very nature. God is not lazy. God is not inactive. God is not retired. God is not living off of His retirement investments. No...He is actively working.

6. This is why work is connected to our very purpose. Our lives are about relationships and responsibility! The most fulfilled people in the world are those who embrace both.

7. We will never find fulfillment watching TV, playing our Xbox, being a couch potato, and living a life void of work and responsibility. God put the need to work in order to find fulfillment into our DNA.

- Some of you may be thinking; “If that’s true, why do I hate work so much?”

II. Work Has Been Tainted By Sin

Gen. 2:17-19 “Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”(NLT)

A. Sin causes our work to be more difficult

1. Some of the consequences of sin is that now work can tend to be less enjoyable, more grueling, and require more effort. “*You will struggle to scratch a living from it...by the sweat of your brow...*”

2. Now we’re talking about things we can all identify with...struggling and sweating to make ends meet. Struggling at work...sweating to meet the deadlines...losing sleep thinking about all that needs to get done. Work has been tainted by sin.

- I remember one time as a teenager (about 15) coming home after a 16 hr day of moving irrigation pipe / driving tractor / and moving chickens all night. I remember my arms being all scraped up from the wire cages and coming home exhausted all for \$3.25 an hr! My parents comments...”Well, that’s work!” “It’s hard!”

3. Because of our focus on the hardships of work it’s no wonder we have a culture that is obsessed with retirement. We have focused primarily on the hardships of work and this fascination with being rid of it.

4. Am I saying retirement is wrong and we shouldn’t plan for it? Hang on to that thought and we’ll talk about it in a few minutes!

B. Sin causes our work to be less fulfilling

1. Notice it says that the ground will grow “thorns and thistles.” Sin will cause it to be less productive and less fulfilling than it could be.
2. Our fulfillment in life comes from experiencing loving relationships and fulfilling responsibility. But our work environments are fallen and affected by sin. Therefore, we can struggle staying connected to God and we struggle with the fallen relationships at work. Thus, we lack fulfillment.
3. We experience a lot of thorns and thistles in our jobs. We experience stressful work environment, deadlines, expectations regarding productivity; unrealistic bosses, mean co-workers, and an increasing lack of fulfillment.
4. When you feel hindered in your productivity at work and hindered in your relationships at work there isn't going to be much fulfillment going on at your job. This is the result of sin.
5. Some of the most unfulfilling jobs I have experienced were the result of the poor relationships not the job itself. Work has been tainted by sin. BUT...

III. Work Is Redeemed In Christ

- Our relationship with Jesus gives us a new perspective on work.

Col. 3:23 “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” (NLT)

A. Our work becomes an opportunity to serve God

1. Through Christ, we can have a new perspective regarding our work. We are no longer just working for a company / boss / or for a paycheck. Now we can change our thinking to being employees of Jesus. Jesus is our boss
2. Once we give our lives to Christ, our lives belong to Him. Everything we do is an extension of our relationship with Him. Therefore, even my job, no matter what it is, is an extension of my relationship with Jesus.
3. Therefore to love God fully is to reflect Him accurately everywhere I am including work. We now literally work for the Lord. Now, even my job has eternal value and eternal consequences.
4. Serving God doesn't just take place inside the ministries of the local church, serving God now includes where I work and what I do. God will reward us according to how well we served Him.

I Cor. 3:13 “But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value.” (NLT) Our lives now serve His purposes wherever we are at. What we do in every context of life matters!

5. Unfortunately we have created these secular and spiritual mindsets. There is a huge dichotomy that exists between what is secular and what is sacred. For a follower of Christ, there is no separation. All I do I do for the Lord. It's all sacred.

6. Having this mindset changes how we view work. I am getting up every day, rolling out of bed, going to work serving Christ. It's not just the Pastor who does this, but all of you as well. (Whether you drive to work / work from home / or work as a full time stay at home mom. It's all work and it all matters.)

B. Our work becomes an opportunity to be used by God

Matt. 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." (NLT)

1. Where do you think is the best place for the light to be noticed? In the darkness! How many of you work in a dark workplace? Most work environments are not Christ centered.
2. Every follower of Christ has a tremendous opportunity to be used by God in their work environment to be salt and light. Your life can be used to help people discover the reality of God.
3. You're not just a person earning a paycheck. You are God's servant on assignment sent to that company for the expressed purpose of representing Him in the darkness.
4. You are a servant of the Most High God advancing the Kingdom of God in the workplace.
5. There is a move of God going on in this country where believers everywhere are embracing their calling and responsibility to not just work, but work and represent Jesus in their workplace.
6. This is how Jesus redeems work. Have you allowed Him to redeem work in your life? How do you view it? Do you dread it every day? Do you see no value in it except a paycheck? Will you embrace God's perspective of work? Can you see it as an opportunity to serve and be used?

IV. Work Should Be Embraced Not Avoided

Ecc. 5:18 "It is good for people to eat, drink, and enjoy their work under the sun during the short life God has given them, and to accept their lot in life." (NLT)

A. View work as good value rather than evil necessity

1. We need to change our thinking in regards to work. It's not a necessary evil. Work is a value that comes from the heart of God and should be embraced, taught, and modeled.
2. I believe work needs to be modeled for our children. I've heard parents over the years comment to me regarding their kids not being required to work around the house or outside the house as they get older (ie. Getting jobs)
3. The argument goes like this: "My kids are going to have to work for the rest of their lives. I want to let them be kids and put off work for as long as I can." It sounds

really nice, but is it correct? Is it biblical?

4. If we look at work as a value then we must teach this value to our children. We need to teach them God's perspective about work. Can you imagine if we raised an entire generation that viewed work as serving the Lord and being used by God to be salt and light in the workplace?
5. What would happen if the best employees, the most conscientious, most responsible, most diligent, most creative and innovative ones were the children we raised to be the change agents of our culture. This is what it could be if we teach work as a biblical value not an evil necessity!
6. This is why teaching your children to work is not a bad thing. Teaching them to help around the house / share household responsibilities /and even get jobs outside the house when that is appropriate. To view responsibility as a value to be embraced not avoided.

B. Embrace the benefits of work rather than the limitations

1. We tend to view work as the thing that keeps us from doing all the things we want to rather than the benefits it provides. Because we see work as a necessary evil that limits our lives we have become obsessed with the idea of retirement.
2. Therefore, retirement has been the goal of work. Work is simply a means to provide a comfortable retirement someday where we can quit work and spend the rest of our days doing what we want to .
3. Now, before all the retired people get mad at me let me say that I have no issue with people retiring from their jobs / positions / careers that they have done for years. When my dad retired from His job it was a day of great celebration!
4. The issue I have is retiring from work...from responsibility...embracing an idle life.

II Thess. 3:11 "Yet we hear that some of you are living idle lives, refusing to work and meddling in other people's business." (NLT) This is what happens when we're idle. Nothing good! Our lives are not to be idle!

5. If work is a value, can one ever "put their time in" and then quit? Honesty is a value. Do we quit being honest at a certain age? Do we quit being loving? Do we quit showing compassion? Of course not! We never retire from values!
6. One of the most discouraging things to me as a Pastor is not that people retire from their jobs, but that they retire from fulfilling responsibility working for the Kingdom of God. I have had retired people in church tell me when I have asked them to serve say; "Not me! I'm retired. I've put my time in.
7. Here they are at a season of their life when they could have the most significant impact for the Kingdom of God imaginable. Years of wisdom and experience going to waste while the church struggles to find enough people to serve.
8. The people that inspire me the most are the older people in church who are tearing it up for the Kingdom of God. Retirement is not even a consideration. Their lives are about serving the purposes of God and they are making a difference!

- One of the greatest examples of this at Foothills is Don Meng! 76 years young! He's a champion in the Kingdom of God!
- As we enter Fall, we have so many needs as a church. So many opportunities to serve. If you're retired please know that your life isn't over. God has a job for you to do and He is calling you to His work force.
- I value those who are retired here at Foothills. Our culture does not value age. Our culture values youth. I want you to know that we at Foothills value all the generations. We are a multi-generational church. This is one of our strengths as a church. There is a vision we are chasing, and there is job that waits for you here at Foothills.

How is God asking you to change how you think about work?