



ALL WORK IS GOD'S WORK

LESSON 1: Change the Way You Think About Your Work

INTRODUCTION

A young attendant is on his smoke break. He can be seen lounging outside the gas station, chatting with a friend. "This new job is great!" he says. "We work twelve-hour shifts, so we only have to suffer for three days, and then the rest of the week is ours!" His friend laughs, nodding in agreement, and they both walk back into the gas station.

Suffering? Is that how he thinks of work?

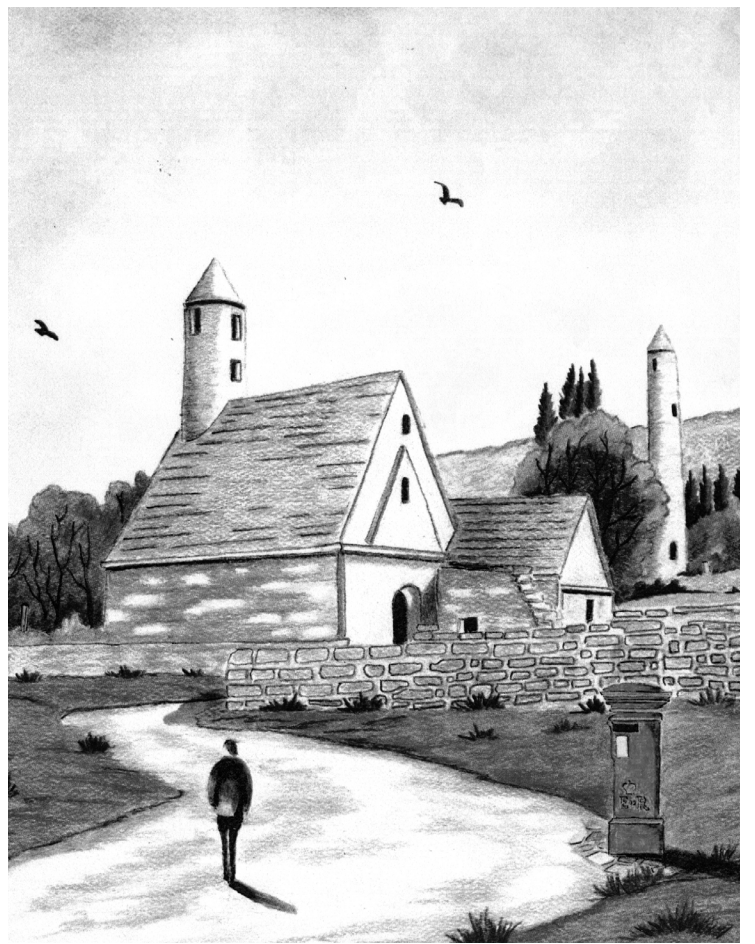
Unfortunately, this young man is not alone. Many people dread waking up for work and count the hours until they can punch out and go home. They work hard just to get through the week, and they live for the weekend. Maybe you have felt this way too. After all, work is just a means to pay the bills, right?

Wrong.

Society sends us mixed messages about the purpose of work and its importance. But the Bible clearly teaches that God designed us for work and made it an important part of living. If only people like the young attendant could see their work as a reflection of the image of God in them and not as suffering. We hope that by the end of this course, you too will see your work as a part of God's plan for your life.

ABOUT THE COURSE

- ▶ This course emphasizes the importance of establishing Christ as your firm foundation and putting your trust in His unfolding plan.
- ▶ Not only will this course be helpful if you are trying to maintain a job, but it will also provide hints and tips about what employers look for in potential employees.
- ▶ By sharing ten important principles with you, this course will help you develop a strong work ethic and show you that working can be a great joy and a source of fulfillment.



Artwork by Gary F., former Crossroads student

- ▶ Whether you are employed, unemployed, underemployed or retired, this course has applications for your life. Even if you aren't currently working at a traditional job, the lessons in this course can be applied to any work that God has called you to do.
 - ▶ Since the Bible passages used in this course were taken from the New International Version of the Bible (NIV), the material, particularly the fill-in-the-blank questions, will most easily be completed if you use an NIV Bible. If you do not have a copy of the NIV, you can write to Crossroads and request one.
- I will be using the NIV to complete this course.
- I will be using a different translation of the Bible to complete this course. (Write the name of the translation you will be using here: _____)

THE JOY OF WORK

Our society seems to value hard work less and less these days. It is not uncommon to find people who are indifferent—like the gas station attendant—and even lazy on the job. Whatever happened to a good old-fashioned “high standards, quality service” approach to our jobs? You might not know it, but that idea comes straight from God’s Word. Unfortunately, many people are ignoring this important calling and missing out on the joy of work.

The *joy of work*? This phrase might have surprised you, but most people can think of work they like to do. For some it may be gardening; for others, fixing up the car or cooking.

1. What is something you love to do? Why?

We do not usually call things we like doing “work.” But in fact, if we go about it in the right way—with the proper attitude and perspective—our work can be not only enjoyable but also a meaningful part of our lives as we take up God’s call for us to work.

2. In the past, have you thought about work as a source of suffering and a means to pay the bills or as a source of joy and a meaningful part of your life? Mark your answer on a scale of one to ten.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

source of suffering

source of joy

Explain your answer.

A North American retailer specializing in selling outdoor gear has coined the employee slogan “You were born to work here.” They are committed to hiring hardworking employees who take pride in their job and pursue excellence, employees who value the same standards that the company was founded upon. This company seems to be on the right track. What if every company instilled these values into their employees? And what if employees changed the way they saw their jobs and took up a similar motto: “I was born for this!” This brings us to our first principle for success in the workplace.

PRINCIPLE #1: CHANGE THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR WORK

OUR TRIUNE GOD WORKS

We often fail to recognize that our triune God—as Father, Son and Holy Spirit—also works. The entire first chapter of Genesis describes how God was busy at work, creating the earth in six days.

3. Read Genesis 1:1 and fill in the blanks below.

In the _____ God _____ the heavens and the _____.

4. Read Job 9:5–9. What words are used to describe the work completed by God the Father at the time of creation? Circle **four** correct answers.
 - A. shakes
 - B. speaks
 - C. seals
 - D. sits
 - E. stretches

Throughout the Bible, we discover more about the work that God the Father accomplished before time began. This work was the formation of His plan. He plotted out exactly how time would unfold and thought up every part of life. Then, throughout history, He worked to bring His plan into being.

5. Read Ephesians 1:4–5. What did God do before the creation of the world?

The Bible shows how God mapped out His plan and kept the big picture in mind. We know that He never lost sight of this plan, because Scripture is full of prophecies and promises that God fulfilled every time. God promised Noah that He would never again send a flood to destroy the entire earth, and this promise is still kept today. God continues to have His people in mind as He works to govern the world in His divine providence. The Scriptures are full of information about God’s providence in our lives.

6. Read Romans 8:28 and fill in the blanks below.

And we know that in all things God _____ for the good of those who _____ him, who have been called according to his _____.

7. Read Proverbs 16:9. What does this passage tell us about the plans of God in comparison with the plans of His people? Circle **two** correct statements.
- A. In their hearts humans plan their course.
 - B. The plans of people are sure to fail.
 - C. Nothing is planned by man.
 - D. The Lord establishes the steps of humans.

The Bible also tells us that God the Son works. Jesus Christ worked alongside the Father in creation (John 1:3) and then came into the world to do His Father's work of salvation. The first four books of the New Testament very clearly describe the work Jesus did on earth.

8. According to John 5:17, who is busy working?

Jesus worked for the good of His people from the time He was born in the stable to His resurrection and ascension. The Son continues to work at His Father's right hand, ruling over all things and acting on our behalf.

9. According to Ephesians 1:22–23, over what work did God the Father give His Son authority?

The Holy Spirit can also be seen working throughout the Bible. The Spirit was at Jesus' baptism, spoke to prophets and enabled the disciples to speak in tongues. And these are only a few examples. The Holy Spirit worked throughout history and is accomplishing the work of salvation today, dwelling in us and revealing God's will. Once you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit takes residence in your heart and you are sealed forever as God's child.

10. Read 1 Corinthians 6:11 to learn about the work of the Holy Spirit. Fill in the blanks below.

But you were washed, you were _____, you were _____ in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the _____ of our God.

11. Read Luke 3:21–22 to find another example of the Holy Spirit's work. Is the following statement **true** or **false**? Circle one. If it is false, correct the statement in the space provided below.

When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit watched from heaven.

12. Read John 14:16. For what purpose did Jesus send another advocate, the Holy Spirit, to the disciples?

Optional verses for **in-depth** study:
Genesis 1:2; John 7:37–39; John 16:5–11

GOD'S PEOPLE WORK TOO

God works, and He means for His people to work as well. That is because we have been created in His image (Genesis 1:27) and with the ability to work. Because God works, we are reflecting His image when we work. In the Bible, we see many examples of God's people working at the tasks God called them to do. Even at the beginning of creation, God had the first human working.

13. Read Genesis 2:15–20. What jobs did God give Adam? Circle **two** correct statements.

- A. God put Adam in control of the weather.
- B. God told Adam to work the garden and take care of it.
- C. God gave Adam the job of naming the animals.
- D. God told Adam to clean up after the animals.

14. Draw lines from the names on the left to the correct descriptions of the work God commanded these people to do on the right.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A. Noah (Genesis 6:14–16) | 1. Eat a scroll and then prophesy. |
| B. Joseph (Genesis 41:14–16) | 2. Glean in the fields. |
| C. Moses (Exodus 3:9–10) | 3. Build an ark. |
| D. Ruth (Ruth 2:2–3) | 4. Lead the Israelites out of Egypt. |
| E. Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:1–4) | 5. Interpret a dream. |

15. Read Colossians 3:23. What work do you think God has given you to do? It could be something large (becoming a missionary) or small (being a good example to a friend).

THE WORK ETHIC SHAPES YOU

You can see that you are hard-wired for work. You might say that when God created you in His image, He planted work right into your DNA. This isn't bad; in fact, it's magnificent! Once you see your work as a reflection of God, work is no longer agony but instead a thrilling and fulfilling adventure in which we help create a world that is a better place to live.

Let's begin exploring this principle by considering the idea of the work ethic. Have you ever wondered why it is called work *ethic*? An ethic is a moral code by which to live. Ethics tell us about the right and wrong way of doing things, from how we conduct ourselves in personal relationships to how we handle our finances to how we regard the environment.

The work ethic, then, is a moral code for our work. It is a set of values based on hard work and diligence. In the same way that we consider those who cheat on their spouses immoral, we would also say that those who do not have the work ethic are immoral or unethical. Someone with a good work ethic will probably be selected for better positions, more responsibility and maybe a promotion.

16. Circle **one** word that describes someone with a good work ethic.

dedicated

lazy

forgetful

unorganized

17. Describe the work ethic in your own words.

We have learned that God works and that we reflect His image and fulfill our purpose when we work. We have also learned how to understand work through the moral framework of ethics. Now let us consider how this call to uphold a strong work ethic is a *command* from God to His followers.

In Exodus 20, God gives his people the Ten Commandments, a set of rules for living as His followers. The fourth commandment focuses on our need for rest—a command not many would complain about. But tucked within that command to rest is a command to work. We are told to work for six days and rest for one. This proves to us how important work must be to God.

18. Read Exodus 20:8–11. Is the following statement **true** or **false**? Circle one. If it is false, correct the statement in the space provided below.

When God tells us to work, it is only a suggestion.

As Christians, we should have a good work ethic. We should want to do our best and work hard. God is the reason we work diligently at our jobs and all of our activities. We have been wired for work by God, and as Christians we want to obey. By developing your work ethic, you can show others your love for God, demonstrate kindness toward His people and proclaim your faith.

When you truly understand that your work is done as a reflection of God's image in you, a transformation takes place. The drudgery of work becomes joyful. Because you are working for God, you will find enjoyment throughout the day, and you will not be the only one to notice. Your colleagues and boss will notice this change in you too, and in this way, you can model a Christian life for them.

19. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 and fill in the blanks below.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's _____, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing _____, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

You can see from this verse that we should become more like God every day! It is very important for us to set a good example for others. No matter what age we are, we affect those around us, both positively and negatively. As a Christian in the workplace, it is imperative that you set a godly example for your coworkers, because you are representing Christ. The apostle Paul taught this truth to the new Christians at Thessalonica.

20. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:4–7. Think of someone who has been a good or godly example for you. What did he or she do that impacted you?

21. In your past or current job, have you modeled good or bad behavior to your coworkers? Please explain.

The Bible says some beautiful things about those who work hard to set a good example for others. The apostle Paul put a lot of effort into setting a godly example. He dedicated his life to bringing others to Christ. Even while in prison, Paul wrote encouraging letters full of joy and hope, confirming that God's power and love can shine through any situation.

22. Read 2 Timothy 2:15. According to this verse, what kind of worker should you be?

23. Reflect on 1 Timothy 4:12. Where has God placed you so that you can proclaim your faith and set an example through your actions?

24. Read Matthew 5:16 and fill in the blanks below.

*In the same way, let your _____ shine before others, that they may see your _____
_____ and glorify your Father in heaven.*

There are many ways to glorify God. Most Christians probably think of worship, evangelism or prayer. These are all ways to honor God, but we can worship God with our everyday tasks too. God not only calls us to faith but also to express that faith in all our endeavors. This is the key to everyday Christian life. Whatever we are doing, we need to do it for the Lord, and this includes our work.

25. Read Colossians 3:17 and fill in the blanks below.

*Whatever you do, whether in _____ or _____, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
_____ to God the Father through Him.*

26. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31 and fill in the blanks below.

So whether you _____ or _____ or whatever you do, do it all for the _____ of God.

27. How do you praise God in your daily activities?

GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOU

The workforce is a competitive system. Employers know exactly what they are looking for and sometimes have very specific criteria to fill. If you have been away from the workforce for some time, the idea of hauling out your resume and applying for jobs can be daunting. But you should not be afraid.

You are valuable, and God has a plan for you. You might feel hopeless and discouraged, but you are not alone in these feelings. Long ago, the Israelites endured similar hardships. God had promised them the land of Canaan, but they were in exile because of their disobedience. They had to wait many decades for God's plan to unfold—but there was hope.

28. Read Jeremiah 29:10–14 and summarize God's promises.

God made these promises to His people, and He fulfilled them. The Israelites had to stop worrying and put their trust in God. He had a plan and knew what He was doing. Your heavenly Father has a plan for you too; pray and trust Him to guide your steps.

Your work, unlike that of the gas station attendant, does not have to be a form of suffering. Through the work ethic, even the drudgery of your job can be transformed into joy as you work in reflection of the image of God within you.

29. How does knowing that God created people to work change the way you view your work and career?

30. Name one specific thing you will do at work or elsewhere this week to model the work ethic and let your light shine before others.

Use this space for **prayer requests, questions for your mentor, or comments.**
You can also use this space to **write a poem or draw.**

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