

# The Christian and Work



## SABBATH—DECEMBER 5

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13; Deuteronomy 16:15; Exodus 25:10–30:38; Galatians 5:22–26.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “So, my dear brothers and sisters, stand strong. Don’t let anything change you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. You know that your work in the Lord is never wasted” (1 Corinthians 15:58, ERV).



God wants us to see work as one of His gifts to us.

**GOD MADE WORK.** On the perfect earth before sin, God gave Adam and Eve the job of taking care of the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Their work brought them joy. It gave them happiness to make beauty come alive in their garden home. So, we see that even in a perfect life without sin, suffering, or death, humans had work to do.

We now live in the time between Eden and the promised life with God in heaven. During this time, God wants us to see work as one of His gifts to us. The Jewish people in Bible times taught each child how to do a special job. A father who did not teach his son how to do a special job taught his son to be a criminal. Jesus, the Son of God, spent many years working as a carpenter in Nazareth (Mark 6:3). This work was part of the training that helped Jesus to get ready for the work God planned for Him in the future. Paul worked with Aquila and Priscilla making tents for a year and a half. On Sabbaths, Paul taught the Jews (Acts 18:1–4; 2 Thessalonians 3:8–12). Paul’s tentmaking and preaching were both God’s work. This week, we look at God’s plan for work in our lives and its part in Christian education.

**THE MANY SIDES OF WORK (Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13)**

**“People should be happy and do good while they live. I know there’s nothing better for them to do than that. Each of them should eat and drink. People should be satisfied [happy] with all their hard work. That is God’s gift to them” (Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13, NIV).**

“Work.” A word with many possible meanings. We work because we need to put food on our tables. We work because we need to pay bills. We work so that we can save a little money for hard times ahead. Losing a job is often worse than having to put up with a bad job or a difficult work experience.

Work can give a person worth. How do you most often answer the questions, “What do you do?” or “What are you?” We tell people what our jobs are. Most people continue to work after they retire. Sometimes they work part-time. Other times they serve as volunteers. Jobs give us a reason to get out of bed each morning. Give a teenager a job and he or she probably will stay out of trouble!

**Read Genesis 3:19. What is happening in this verse, and why? What do the answers tell us about the other reason that God gave humans work?**

The work that God gives humans before the Fall changes quickly after sin. Genesis 3:19 shows us another reason for work. For some people, a job means only hard work and a lot of effort, which ends only when they die. They hate their jobs. They want to retire and hope to be healthy when they do. For other people, a job can take over their whole life. They feel sad when they do not work. They do not know what to do or where to turn. When they retire, they may fall apart. Sometimes they die early.

Christians need to learn how to work God’s way. Work is more than just about making money. Humans are more than just people who work. We must have the correct idea about work. Work is a way to serve God and other people. We work because we are friends with God. Part of a teacher’s job is to help students find the work in life that uses the skills God gave them.

**What do you do? That is, what are you doing with your life? How can you honor God by doing it?**



**Work is part of our friendship with God.**

**WORK AND GROWTH (Deuteronomy 16:15)**

Work is what we do in life. People who work at desk jobs use their bodies in some way to do some work. That may mean only typing on a computer!

**Many verses below use “hands” as a word picture for work. What do these verses teach us about work?**

**Deuteronomy 16:15** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Ecclesiastes 9:10** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Proverbs 21:25** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Jeremiah 1:16** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**God gave us work so that our lives will have joy and meaning.**

God gave us work so that our lives will have joy and meaning (read Proverbs 10:4; Proverbs 12:14). Every person has the skill to do something meaningful in life. We do not find meaning in life simply by thinking about doing something. We feel worth in life only when we do it.

Work is God’s blessing to us (read Psalm 90:17). It helps our lives to have meaning. At the same time, God’s plan is for our work to bless other people. Paul writes that we must work. We must do something useful with our hands. Then we will have something to share with other people. Paul lived by this important rule, for sure.

“You . . . know that I have used my own hands to meet my needs. I have also met the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that we must work hard and help the weak. We must remember the words of the Lord Jesus. He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive [take]’ ” (Acts 20:34, 35, NIV). Nehemiah’s simple prayer should be ours: “But I prayed to God. I said, ‘Make my hands stronger’ ” (Nehemiah 6:9, NIV).

**How do you feel about work? How is your work a blessing to other people?**

**DOING EXCELLENT WORK (EXODUS 25:10–30:38)**

**Read over Exodus 25:10–30:38. How much did God care about the place of worship that He asked Moses to build? What does this answer tell us about who He is?**

God tells Moses to build a tent for Him. What if Moses says, “No problem, Lord! I have been putting up tents ever since I ran away from Egypt 40 years ago. . . . Just give me a second, and I’ll get the job done!” Any man living in Moses’ day can put up a tent. It is simple for him. He can do it with a blindfold over his eyes, with his mind on other far more important things. Maybe Moses is surprised when God gives him a long “how to do it” list about putting up the tent, all the furniture inside, and the clothes for the holy leaders. God gives Moses almost 150 commands about how to build and make everything! To make a simple table, Moses must do seven different things (Exodus 25:23–30).

God shows a lot of attention to the little things in His commands to Moses about how to build His tent. This shows God loves for us to do excellent work. He wants us to make everything as perfect as we can. Moses uses the best gold, wood, silver, and cloth. God gives him an excellent building plan. The work to build the tent must be excellent too. The message is clear: God does not accept sloppy or careless work!

God is the One who gets the work on His tent started. He also gives Moses the people to work on building and making everything. We read in Exodus 31:1–6 and Exodus 35:30–36:1 that God Himself gives the people the skill needed. God pours His Spirit on the top two men in charge. Then they have the wisdom and knowledge necessary to do the job just as the Lord commanded (Exodus 36:1). God also gives these two men “special skills to teach other people” (Exodus 35:34, ERV). They pass on their knowledge to other people in Israel. In this way, the Israelite community continues to have their knowledge. God also gives other people in the Israelite community the gifts and skills needed to work with these two men. Together, they finish the work (Exodus 36:2).

So, what does this teach us? Even as sinners, we must do a good job. God expects us always to do our best. He wants us to put our skills, time, and education to good use for His cause.



**God does not accept sloppy or careless work!**

**WORK AND SPIRITUAL LIFE (Galatians 5:22–26)**

“We get our new life from the Spirit. So we should follow the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25, ICB). One’s work and spiritual life cannot be separated. Christianity is not clothes that can be put on or taken off whenever you want. No, Christianity makes you into a whole new person. This new person shows himself or herself in every part of life, including work.

**Read about the gifts Paul talks about in Galatians 5:22–26. Which of these gifts do you have? How do you use them in your work?**



**Christianity is not the same as clothes that can be put on or taken off whenever you want.**

*The Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* says that the “spiritual” person is “one who shows the fruit of the Spirit in his or her life.”—Adapted. So, when we are connected with Jesus, we will show that we are believers in all parts of our lives.

A man is dying at the Florida Hospital. His best friend sits beside him. Nurses come in and out of the room. They take care of the dying man’s needs. The man’s best friend asks the nurses where they went to school and were trained. Many of the nurses say they went to school at Florida Hospital College.

The care that these nurses give to the dying man touches his best friend’s heart. Later, the best friend makes several visits to Florida Hospital College to find out more about this school. Why? Because he tells people that the nurses trained at this school gave more tender loving care to his dying friend than the other nurses trained at different schools. That is, the best friend saw that the nurses from Florida Hospital College were different. They were kinder to his dying friend.

The best friend left a gift of \$100,000 to the college so that more nurses can be educated the same way as the nurses who took care of his friend. Yes, being spiritual means learning how to be kind to other people all the time, the same as Jesus.

**How do you show your own spiritual life in the day-to-day tasks you do? What do you think people think of you because of it? (Because in the end, people watch us, and they do think something.)**

## TAKING CARE OF EVERYTHING GOD GIVES US (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

“Whatever work you do, do your best” (Ecclesiastes 9:10, ICB). This verse is King Solomon’s advice for how to take care of everything God gives us in all parts of our lives.

What is Christian stewardship? Stewardship is about how we take care of every gift God gives us. A steward is a good manager of God’s gifts. Many think that stewardship is just about managing our money. But it is so much more. So, we must understand that stewardship includes God’s gifts to us too.

In the church, what gifts, things, and blessings has God given us to do His work? Peter says that God gives gifts to each one of us. Peter names these Christians with their gifts as “religious leaders” (1 Peter 2:5, NLV). Christian stewards, or managers, are responsible to God for how they take care of and use all of God’s gifts: money, time, energy, talent, and everything else.

**Read Ecclesiastes 9:10 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. What is the message to us in these verses about how we should work? How should we teach other people to work too?**

One of our biggest problems today is that we separate the different parts of life from each other. We separate work life from family life. We separate spiritual life and our free time from everything else too. Of course, we must have some separation between different parts of our lives. Here’s a good example: we should leave work at the office, so that we can spend time with family at home. When we enjoy our free time, we also should continue to spend time with God.

But we must remember that our spiritual life must be a part of every area of our lives. The Christian’s work grows out of his or her fellowship and work with God. Work is one way that we can get to know God better and be with Him. So, it is wrong to keep religious life separate from the rest of our life. We should not limit our time with God to only one day, one hour, or even just one part of our life. God should be in all parts of our lives.

**Do you separate your spiritual life from the other parts of your life? If yes, how can you learn to be spiritual in all parts of life?**



**It is not good to bring work home from the office so that it gets in the way of spending time with our family.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Genesis 3, Ecclesiastes 2:18–23; Ephesians 6:5–8; read Ellen G. White, “The Temptation and Fall,” pages 52–62; in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

Work. Is it a curse or a blessing? Did God give it to us as part of His curse on sin? (Read Genesis 3:17.) If we read Genesis closely, we see that the ground was cursed, and not the work. Ellen G. White says that God gave us work but as a blessing: “After the Fall, man’s life was filled with hard work and things he needed to take care of. God gave this work to man because He loved us. Humans needed this work because of what sin did to us. So, hard work helps man control his hunger, his body, and the things he wants. Work helps man develop the habit of self-control. Work is part of God’s big plan for saving man from the ruin and damage caused by sin.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 60, adapted.

Maybe we make work a curse. For sure, work can feel the same suffering when we work too much or our work is boring. Work also can feel the same as suffering when we make our work more important than God or our families. What do you think? Whatever our job in life, we need to think about our work in the right way. Christian education must help people to learn why work is important. At the same time, we must learn not to make a false god out of work.



“Humans [need hard] work because of what sin did to us. So, hard work helps man control his hunger, his body, and the things he wants.”

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read Ecclesiastes 2:18–24. Why does Solomon say that work is both a blessing and a curse at the same time? How can we have the right thinking about our jobs? What do these verses teach us?
- ② How can we teach our families that work is a good thing?
- ③ Doing an excellent job and working too much: How are these things different? How do we keep from falling into the trap of working too much? (Read Ecclesiastes 2:23 for the answer.)
- ④ Paul says, “When we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘Whoever will not work should not be allowed to eat.’ ” (2 Thessalonians 3:10, ERV). Of course, this important rule is good advice. Can you think of some examples where this advice does not work? That is, why must we be careful **not** to say that we always must follow this rule?