

Healthy Attitude Toward Job • Genesis 1-2; Colossians 3:17

Some people are tall; some people are short. Some are heavy; some are thin. Some are young and some are old. Some are male; some are female. There is enormous diversity but one thing we all share in common is time. We all have 168 hours each week. No one has more time than anyone else.

If you sleep for seven hours per night you are in bed 50 hours a week. That is about the same number of hours the average American spends at work. You may not get paid for 50 hours a week but when you add commute time, overtime, lunch and other work-related minutes your total may come to as many as 56 or more hours each week. That is one-third of all your hours.

If you and I have a good and healthy attitude toward our jobs it will go a long way toward having a good and healthy attitude toward all of the rest of life. If we have an unhealthy attitude toward our jobs we risk contamination of the rest of our lives.

Okay, I admit that work can be stressful and that not all jobs are easy. But even though it may be stressful, those with a healthy attitude toward a job believe that work is good to do.

The Bible establishes the goodness of work from page one. Here are a couple of quotes from the very front of the Bible:

. . . the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. 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. (Genesis 2:1-2)

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth

and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:27-28)

As Christians we believe that God started everything. He created the world by working. God is a worker who does a very good job and takes great satisfaction in the work he does. One of his works was to create us. When he created humans he created us in his likeness or in his image. There are many similarities between God and us. One of them is that God created us to work. That means that when we work we have a grand opportunity to be God-like.

Are you one of those people who generate lots of questions when you read the Bible? Maybe you have wondered about the connection between work and sin. You will notice that all the talk about God and work precedes the Bible's report of sin coming into our world. If Adam and Eve had

never eaten that forbidden fruit and the world was not contaminated by sin we would all have jobs today. Work is good because work is what God does. Work is good to do because work

makes us more like God.

Maybe you have wondered about the connection between work and heaven. Is heaven an eternal vacation, a forever slumber party or some kind of supernatural retirement village? Absolutely not! Heaven is a place where we will all have jobs to do. God has not quit his work and we won't quit ours. When Jesus talked about his return to heaven he told his followers that his job would be preparing housing units for all of us Christians to live in when we join him there. It is interesting that Jesus grew up in a carpenter's shop and the job he was apprenticed to as a child is the job he continued to do when he went to heaven. Jesus had a job waiting for him in heaven and we can anticipate that we, too, will have our jobs to

God is a worker who does a very good job and takes great satisfaction in the work he does.

do and will do them with great satisfaction.

This healthy perspective on work that sees it as good can revolutionize our lives. Most of all, work is not what we do in order to live. Work is not something we have to get done so we can get on with our real lives. Work is not some bad thing that has to be done in life. We were created to work. We are designed to work. Work is essential to our lives. Work is very good. Work is being like God.

Does this mean that work is always easy or fun? Obviously it is not. Sin in our world has made work harder than God originally intended for it to be. Again, this is our opportunity to be God-like because God does his job even when his job is hard to do. God is constantly dealing with lazy employees, workers who do not show up, corrupt companies and people who are hard to get along with. Actually, God does some of his best work with some of the most difficult people under the worst of circumstances. So, as we deal with the difficulties we also have an opportunity to be God-like.

Does that mean that all work is good to do and that in every job we can be God-like? No. It is impossible to be a God-like extortionist or a God-like bank robber or con artist. But most legal jobs are our opportunity to work like God.

Some people set up an imaginary hierarchy that rates some professions higher than others, but that is wrong. It is not better or worse to be a pilot, painter, professor, printer or pastor. It is work itself that is good. God takes great delight in our work, so take great delight in being like God in the work that you do.

A second measure of a healthy attitude toward job is to ask, "Who do I work for?" There are three most common answers to this question. The first is, "I work for my company." Lots of people first think of General Electric or General Motors or General Pizza as their employer. This makes sense although it is probably not the very best answer.

"I work for myself," is another common reply. That certainly is a response of the nation's millions of self-employed Americans. Although there are social analysts who say that in today's

economy we should all think of ourselves as self-employed because so many people change jobs and careers so often. Very few spend a lifetime with the same company. We are all free agents in a competitive marketplace.

There is a third answer that is perhaps the most common of all. It is that "I work for dead presidents." You know—Washington, Lincoln, Jackson and others whose pictures are printed on the front of our money. For some employees money is what work is all about. Every motivation is monetary.

But a healthy Christian attitude toward work says, "I work for God." St. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:23-24, "*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.*"

In our nation's capitol there are political appointees who come and go with whoever is in office. They range from cabinet members and ambassadors to clerks and assistants. It is fascinating to talk to these political appointees. I am not sure if they are trained to talk this way but they all seem to sound a similar theme. They make it very clear that they work for the President of the United States. If you ask them for their opinion they tell you the president's policy. If you want to know their politics they quote one of the president's speeches. They are there to know and implement the president's policy and to make the president look good. They serve totally at the pleasure of one person, the President of the United States. In my experience, these government employees are intensely loyal to the president. They fully recognize that when the administration changes their jobs change.

As a Christian our attitude is that we work for God. Our positions may change. We may move from state to state, company to company or job to job but we always work for Jesus. He is our boss. His policies are our policies. His success is our success.

When we adopt that kind of attitude toward work then every task is to please him. The highest pay is his praise. We ask him for wisdom. We

trust him when the job gets hard. When promoted or fired, whether owner or unemployed, when stressed or calm—the Christian works for Jesus Christ.

The impact of this perspective can be huge. We have all been around a dysfunctional boss. We have all dealt with difficult, grouchy, angry and unreasonable people. We have all had to do things we did not want to do. All this is seen differently when we remember that we are not doing this for the company or for money. We are doing this for Jesus.

Over the years of our marriage there have been times when Charleen has been away and I have been home—either alone or with our children. I will admit that the house doesn't look as good when she's gone as it does when she's around. The dishes pile up on the sink and the clothes are left on the floor and the bed is not always made. But before she comes home I always try to make the place look good. That may include doing things I don't like to do and that I am not very good at doing. When washing dishes, folding clothes, cleaning bathrooms or putting everything where it is supposed to be I have Charleen in mind. I delight to do things for her. Even the most menial task takes on a positive perspective. It all depends on the person you are doing it for.

As Christians, let us all have that healthy attitude that says, "I work for God."

The third healthy attitude flows from the first two. If I truly believe that work is good and that I am doing it for God then I want to do a good job. Whatever the job, the Christian with a healthy attitude seeks to do it with excellence. In I Corinthians 10:31 we are told, "*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*" And in Colossians 3:17 we read, "*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*"

Doing a good job is good for everybody. There is enormous personal satisfaction that

comes from giving your best whether others recognize your quality work or not. A job well done is good for your employer. Every company should delight to have Christian employees who work hard, do good work, don't gripe with a bad attitude and help others to succeed. But the ultimate reason to do a good job is to make God look good. So, "*whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*"

Several years ago there was a leadership meeting at Wooddale Church that was scheduled for a night when I had two tickets to a Twins baseball game. Okay, so I'm not proud of what I did, but maybe I will feel better after I confess to you that in deciding between the Twins and the meeting, I chose the Twins. I just explained that I had

God does some of his best work with some of the most difficult people under the worst of circumstances.

a long-standing prior commitment and would not be able to make it to the meeting. I figured no one would ever know the difference.

For some strange reason, that night I wore an unusually attention-getting shirt to the game. Around 9:45 that evening two things happened. First, the meeting at church ended in time for everyone to be home to see the 10 p.m. evening news. Second, a local sportscaster with a camera crew came and interviewed the guy sitting next to me for the newscast. I knew what this meant. The people from the meeting I missed would see me at my "prior commitment". I tried my best to be invisible. I was also careful not to scratch my head or say a word. You want to look your best when the camera is rolling.

There are times in our lives when we are absolutely open to inspection and everybody can see everything we are doing. But most of life and most of work is not like that. Yet, as Christians we do our best whether anyone sees us or not. We give our best effort. We speak our best words. We work with gratitude. "*Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*"

Somewhere in Norway is the worker who made a red cardigan sweater of mine. I have never met this person and probably never will. He or she made a quality product with a label that says “Superior Norwegian Craftsmanship”. When I wear the sweater it makes me look good. When I put it on I am always impressed by how good it looks on the inside that no one else ever sees. Somewhere in Norway is a worker who does a good job even where no one looks to see.

Everything we as Christians do should bear the label “Superior Christian Craftsmanship”. We delight to do a good job whether anyone will ever see it or not.

The Bible often identifies people by the jobs they had. Jesus was a carpenter. Peter was a fisherman. Matthew was a tax collector. Lydia was a merchant of purple cloth. David was a shepherd. Esther was a queen. Daniel and Nehemiah were politicians. Luke was a physician. Barnabas was a missionary. Mark was fired as a missionary and was looking for a job. Deborah was a judge. Herod was a king. Pilot was a governor. Ezra was a scribe. Aaron was a priest. Mary was a homemaker. Zechariah was retired but he volunteered at the temple. Joshua was a general. Onesimus

was a slave. And the list goes on: artists, craftsmen, musicians, soldiers, laborers, writers and bakers. It is extraordinary that in the Bible—a comparatively short book considering the time span it covers—God should so often identify people in terms of the work they did. Apparently our jobs are very important to God.

Your work is important, so have a healthy attitude. Be counted among those Christians who say, “Work is good to do!” “I work for God!” “I do good work.”

Faith Matters® is the Broadcast Ministry of
 Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church
 6630 Shady Oak Road
 Eden Prairie MN 55344
 952-944-6300
www.faithmatters.fm
 ©Leith Anderson