**PRINCIPLES FOR WORK**

Sunday School Lesson 15

*Bible Principles for Daily Living*

Psalm 90:17

9/25/2022

**Introduction:** Work is a necessary part of our lives. The Lord is our example of work. There are many references to the works of the Lord all throughout the Bible. The Lord performed work during creation. You and I are the results of his handiwork. When God created man, he did not leave man on this earth to do nothing. He gave him a job to do. He was responsible for dressing and keeping the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). He also asked Adam to take responsibility for naming the animals. Work is a good and healthy thing for us. It is not meant to be something that we do just to pass the time. It is an ordained activity of the Lord. We ought to understand that our work, while it may not be spiritual in nature, is still supposed to be governed and directed by the Lord. In Psalm 90:17, we see a request from the psalmist for the Lord to help him in his work. He asks for the Lord to establish work of the hands of the people of Israel. He asks for this same thing twice. The Lord wants to help us in our work. He wants to help us in every single thing that we do. We do not check out from our relationship with the Lord during the eight or more hours a day that we are checked into the job. We ought to want the Lord to establish us in our work. We ought to ask Him for help to be successful in the work. Thankfully, the Lord has provided us with many principles in His Word that can help us in the workplace. The question, as always, is whether we are willing to apply these principles to bring about the results that the Lord desires. Let’s consider a few of these principles this morning:

1. **WHEN WE WORK, WE ARE NOT WORKING FOR A BOSS. WE WORK FOR THE LORD.**

* The first principle that we must establish is the perspective that we should have in the workplace. We are not working for an employer. We are not working for a boss. We are working for the Lord. The Bible commands us in Colossians 3:23 that whatsoever we do, we are expected to do it heartily as to the Lord. We are not to do it unto men. This is not to say that we do not have a responsibility to the one who hires us or who oversees our work. After all, the Lord illustrated this in John 9:4 by saying that He must work the work of Him that sent Him. The principle that the Word of God establishes for us is that we direct our efforts first with the goal of getting the Lord’s approval in what we are doing. If we were to follow this principle, it would likely resolve at least some of the issues that arise with those whom we report to in the workplace. It does not matter if your job is to take out the trash, drive a bus, greet people entering a store, or looking at spreadsheets all day. We ought to do our jobs heartily (with our full heart in it) with the Lord’s approval as our ultimate goal. If we are not pleasing Him, what does it matter if we have pleased the bosses in the workplace?

1. **WE OUGHT TO WORK WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-ACCOUNTABILITY IN MIND.**

* The Bible tells us in Galatians 6:4 that we ought to let every man prove his own work. It tells us that if we do this, then we will have rejoicing in ourselves alone as opposed to another. This is not instructing against team work in the workplace. It is simply encouraging us to work with the mindset of holding ourselves accountable to the work that we do. A Christian ought not to be the freeloader in the workplace. We all likely know the type of person who does the bare minimum and then hopes that everybody else does enough to make him successful as well. We should work hard so that we can have personal rejoicing in the success of the company. It’s the similar mindset in the church. We rejoice when great things are happening in the church, but the person who is involved and being used of God to see these great things happen has a special rejoicing. Let us be examples to the world of accountability in the workplace. Consider what 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 tells us: “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; 12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.”

1. **WE OUGHT TO RECOGNIZE THAT NOT WORKING IS A SIN AGAINST GOD.**

* Before anyone gets the wrong impression, let’s first understand that working does not just take place in a paid position. You can work in your home. You can work in the church house. You do not have to possess a 9-5 job to please the Lord. Yet, as we have already established in the introduction, work is something that God desires for us to do. The Bible calls the believer that does not work at all a person who walks disorderly. That means that they walk not after the order of the Lord. They are not following His instructions, which is the sin of disobedience at a minimum. The book of Proverbs calls the man who does not work a slothful man. Proverbs 21:25 tells us that the slothful man’s hands refuse to labor. He is brother to a great waster (Proverbs 18:9). The Lord does not desire for us to just sit around and do nothing. That is not His will or purpose for our lives. A man who is not willing to work is one who should not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Be sure to find some area of work that you can and should do and know that God wants you to work.

1. **EXPECTING A REWARD FOR WORK IS REASONABLE AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE LORD.**

* It is okay to expect to get paid fairly for work that you have done. Does it make you more spiritual to make less in a job than what the reasonable pay for that position should be? I believe the Bible shows us on multiple occasions that a laborer is worthy of his hire (1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Cor. 3:8; Luke 10:7). Proverbs 14:23 tells us that in all labor there is profit. Proverbs 13:11 tells us that we gather by labor. Matthew 20:8-15 helps us to understand that we do need to be careful in how we view our reward. The Christian should strive to avoid murmuring or coveting what someone else has received. This is a very common practice in the workplace. Through prayer and wisdom, we can approach matters such as pay raises with our employer. While we expect income from our labors, we are not to be greedy. We do not work just to store up a great surplus of wealth and materials in this world. The Bible does give us Scripture for when it comes to being taken advantage of (Luke 6:28-30). Obviously, we ought to be able to endure what may clearly be unfair treatment, and we can seek God’s will on how to proceed in such scenarios.

1. **OUR MOTIVATION FOR WORK OUGHT TO BE THE PROVISION OF OTHERS.**

* 1 Timothy 5:8 warns us about a man who does not provide for his own household. That man is worse than an infidel. While we can take great care in our work to do a good job for the purpose of pleasing the Lord and being a good example to others, the bottom line is that we labor to be able to provide. Work does give us a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in this world, but at the end of the day, what is done for Christ is all that matters (John 6:27). King Solomon came to understand the basic purpose of work. It was to enjoy the fruits that come afterward (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:13; 5:18-19; 6:7). We labor now for Christ, and we look forward to enjoying those rewards with others later. At first, Solomon tried to find some real purpose in work, but then he realized that this only brought great grief and vexing of his spirit (Ecclesiastes 2:17). Our work in this world does not define us and our purpose. Again, our work for God defines that. We labor to be able to be generous and helpful to others (Ephesians 4:28).

1. **WE MUST NOT ALLOW OUR WORK TO CONSUME US. REST IS GOD-ORDAINED.**

* I’m so glad for so many hard-working Christians that there are today. There are those who are willing to put in the effort to study their trade to ensure that they are not an ashamed workman (2 Tim. 2:15). There are those who work stedfast in difficult jobs (1 Corinthians 4:10-13). There are believers who spend time in prayer asking the Lord to help them to do well and have wisdom and understanding in their jobs (Exodus 31:3; Deuteronomy 24:19; 30:9). These are all great things. I worry, though, as a pastor that there are those who have confused hard work with a worship of work. There is a potential snare that can take place in the workplace. Man can fall in love with the work of his own hands (Psalm 9:16; Acts 7:41). We can allow that work to become our idol, and we justify it by reasoning that we are just doing our best to work hard. Every example of excessive work found in Scripture is given with a negative connotation (Israel in Egypt – Exodus 5:9). Just as God intended for man to work, he also intended for man to have rest (Ecclesiastes 5:12; Deuteronomy 5:13-14). Psalm 104:23 tells us that there is meant to be an end to work. We all agree that being slothful is not right, but let’s also agree that not resting is also an unscriptural practice. Let’s be sure to have a proper balance in the work that we do.