

Work, rest, vacations, retirement

A. Work is fundamentally good and pleasing to God

1. God gave Adam and Eve work to do before the Fall

Genesis 1:28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

2. Work is commanded and viewed positively in the Old Testament: Ex 20:8-9; Prov14:23; 28:19;

3. The New Testament teaches in several places that everyone should work Eph 4:28; Acts 20:34-35; 1 Thess4:11-12; 2 Thess 3:6-12;

4. Doing productive work means producing something that brings benefit to others; thus, work can be seen as one way of loving our neighbors as ourselves (doing good for neighbor)

B. Unpaid work (work that does not receive wages in the marketplace) is also valuable work:

1. Homemaker: Proverbs 31:10, 13-15, 20, 22, 26-27; 1 Timothy 5:10; Titus 2:5

2. Unpaid work in the church: 1 Peter 4:10

3. Studying in school: esp. children and young adults = training to be productive workers

– because of advanced technology, this will often take longer than in previous generations

– though our public school system today does not seem to do this in the least possible amount of time (success of home schooling shows that K-12 students could start later, learn faster, spend fewer hours in classes, also at some point work and learn on job while learning).

Luke 2:46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; 2:52: Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

C. In contrast to a productive worker, note the "sluggard" in Proverbs:

Proverbs 6:9 How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, 11 and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. Also 13:4; 18:9; 19:15; 20:4; 21:25; 26:13-16

D. Why did God give us productive work to do? And why do we have a deep desire to do useful work?

1. The privilege of creating something new: imitating God's creative activity, also wisdom, strength, skill,

Eph 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

→ God made us to enjoy imitating him.

only human beings create, invent, innovate. No animal has ever used intelligent thought to create a product that others would buy.

2. The privilege of creating value: By working, we add value to the world (a loaf of bread or a computer exists that didn't exist before).

- thus God gives us the dignity of causality: we actually affect the course of others' lives,

3. The privilege of supporting ourselves: Gives dignity and self-respect. Imitates God's independence.

4. Variety in work expresses our individuality: God also made us all different (skills, preferences). This leads us to specialize in different things (division of labor), and makes the human race thousands of times more productive, more interesting.

5. Application: Involuntary unemployment (people who are laid off and can't find another job, or can't work because of illness or injury) is a great challenge and difficulty for people; frustration at not being able to do what God made them to do.

E. Work is more difficult and often includes pain after the Fall

Genesis 3:17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust

you shall return."

Psalm 90:10 The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. Also 2 Cor. 11:27

F. We should try to remove the painful aspects of work, and change discouraging futility to rewarding productivity, as we are able to do so. (We should work to overcome all aspects of the curse.) Even after the Fall the Bible still views joyful, productive work as a gift from God. Deuteronomy 16:15; 28:12;

Psalm 90:17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands! Also Eccl. 2:10, 24-25

→ Application: If you have work that you enjoy, or if you can learn to enjoy your work -- a great blessing!

G. In whatever work we do, we are to work to please the Lord and to work for him (even in "secular" jobs)

Colossians 3:22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

H. God calls people to a wide variety of different jobs or "vocations" (from Latin *voco/ vocare*, "to call, summon")

1 Corinthians 7:24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. But also see verses on working to please the Lord (G above)

K. Work provides many temptations to sin

1. Dishonesty at work, or an argumentative, disagreeable attitude: Titus 2:9-10

2. Laziness, carelessness in work: Proverbs 18:9

3. Opposite error: being a workaholic, overworking: Exodus 20:10

Psalm 127:2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

4. Trusting in your own efforts, not trusting in the Lord to give success to your work: Psalm 127:1

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. Also Deuteronomy 8:17-18

L. **Rest: We should take regular times of rest (!)**

1. Each day: sleep (Ps. 127:2 above); also Ecclesiastes 5:12

2. Each week: a regular time of rest from work: (Exod. 20:8-11 not a requirement b/c not under Mosaic Covenant, but it does show us a wise pattern of work + rest)

3. Work reminds us that we can be like God, but the need to rest reminds us that we are not God!
-- God's rest at the end of creation =/=> fatigue but completion of work and delight in that work.

Psalm 121:3 He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

4. The ability to rest is often an issue of trusting God.

Psalm 127:2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

Exodus 31:13 "Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you." Also Lev 25:20-22

Isaiah 57:20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. 21 There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." → will you trust him for the ability to rest?

M. **Longer vacations:** Jewish feasts & Jubilee year teach us that some longer vacations are also good

1. Feast of Booths: 7 days: Leviticus 23:34-43

2. Sabbath year: 1 year in seven

Leviticus 25:3 For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your

vineyard and gather in its fruits, 4 but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.

3. Jubilee Year: Lev. 25: 8-12

4. Jesus' life:

Mark 6:30, The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.

Application → take vacations sometimes! (count it another gift from God!)

5. We should also provide times of rest, of vacation, for family members, employees (Exod. 20:10)

6. Will we need times to rest in heaven? → I don't know.

N. Retirement

1. I differ with the American assumption that the "ideal life" is to work to 65 (66) and then retire and not work productively for the rest of your life.

a. No basis in Scripture that I can find

b. God put us on the earth to work productively in work that brings benefit to others

No exceptions at certain age for Paul's commands to Christians to work: 2 Thess. 3:10-12

c. Ronald Reagan became President at age 66; second term began at age 70

-- many other examples of significant achievement after 65 or 70

d. There should be joy and a sense of fulfillment in continuing to do some productive work (though perhaps it will be unpaid work if you don't need more income)

2. Personally: I plan to slow down (I am slowing down!) but I don't plan to fully "retire"

– until the point where I am physically (or mentally!) unable to work productively.

-- my job allows me to do this (not all jobs do this)

3. In England (perhaps also in US?): assumption that a productive worker should retire to "make room" for a younger worker

a. Incorrect assumption that there are a fixed number of jobs in the country

b. Wrongly views workers as "taking jobs" rather than producers who benefit society

c. Probably a policy adopted under trade union pressure to maintain control over the number of jobs (artificial restriction on the number of workers)

d. Results in significant frustration for healthy, skilled, wise, mature workers being prohibited from working any more (forced into retirement)

4. I am not saying that everybody has to go on earning income until the day they die

a. The more significant issue is idleness vs. productive, useful work.

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

5. With many "retired" people in the U.S. today who still have many productive years left, there is a need to create opportunities for further work. (But many opportunities already exist)

a. Churches b. Mission agencies

c. Local charities and ministries

d. Businesses who will hire part-time

e. People who will network and start new for-profit businesses

Audio recording of classes and these handouts are available on the class website:

<http://www.christianessentialsbc.com>.

See also www.waynegrudem.com