

GOD'S WORK ETHIC

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Instructions: The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Bible On-Line Study Course. Look up and *read in your Bible* the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions further explain the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

God desires that Christians prosper both spiritually and materially. He wants us to enjoy life. Christ Himself said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"I wish above all things," says God through the apostle John, "that thou mayest prosper and be in health" (III John 2). But in order to begin experiencing this kind of life, we must practice the way of life that will produce it. This includes keeping God's commandments and following the principles of Christian living and working that God reveals in His Word.

Let's look into the Bible to learn what kind of an attitude and approach God's Spirit-begotten children should have toward work.

1. When God Almighty put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, did He put man to work? Gen 2:15. What was to be the continuing task of the human race? Gen 1:26-28.

In the first two chapters of Genesis God reveals Himself to us as a worker. Within six days His creative work unfolded. And when He created the first human beings in His own image, He made them workers, too.

God told our progenitors to subdue the earth – to produce from, develop and care for their environment. Then when God planted the garden in Eden, He put the man into the garden in order to cultivate and beautify it.

2. Does the commandment to rest on the Sabbath have another side? Ex 20:9.

Though many have not realized it, the Fourth Commandment also instructs mankind to labor during the rest of the week. That part of the command is just as important as the part requiring man to rest on the seventh day of the week, the day God made holy.

The Sabbath commandment actually dates back to creation week. It was given to keep man in a close spiritual relationship with his Creator, who is a worker – who created and now sustains His creation. And God intends for us to become like Him!

3. Was Jesus Christ sent to this earth to work? John 9:4. Did He reveal that the Father is still busily engaged in His job? John 5:17.
4. How zealously should we do all of our work? Eccl 9:10.

God works with zeal. We are to become more like God by putting the utmost of our energies into whatever we set our hands to do!

5. Did the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of God, point out that working is the way to be self-sufficient? I Thes. 4:11-12.

Notice how the Revised Standard Version renders verse 12: “so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.”

6. Did Paul command manual labor for the person who wasn't used to honest work? Eph 4:28.

7. How did Paul deal with lazy, shiftless idlers? II Thes. 3:10. Did he command them to work? Verses 11-12.

8. Will diligent effort prove its worth? Prov 10:4-5, 13:4. Will the hard worker have the necessities of life? Prov 20:13, 28:19.

9. Are those who refuse to work forever wishing for the things the diligent possess, but always ending up empty handed? Prov 13:4, 21:25.

10. Does the slothful person look for all kinds of dangers to justify his lack of effort? Prov 22:13, 26:13-15. Does he always have clever excuses or hard-luck stories about why he is unemployed – why he shouldn't work? Prov 26:16. Is his love of sleep and lack of effort the cause of his poverty? Prov 6:10-11.

11. Does indolence tend to become habit-forming? Prov 19:15.

Some people use the slightest little excuse to flop down on the bed or couch – they cannot distinguish between true tiredness and just plain laziness!

12. Does it take effort, and sometimes even physical discomfort, to avoid being lazy? Prov 20:4.

13. How does the condition of the yard, the house or the farm of the indolent person usually reveal what kind of individual he really is? Eccl 10:18, Prov 24:30-34.

Take a look around your property. Does your home and yard or farm give you away? If so, take instruction from God's words of wisdom.

God wants us to take care of what we have: “Be thou diligent to know the state of your flocks, and look well to thy herds [or whatever possessions you may have]. For riches are not forever” (Prov 27:23-24).

14. Is there profit in all labor? And nothing but penury in talk? Prov 14:23.

If you happen to be unemployed, you can start profiting from this principle right now. How? By making a “job” out of getting a job. Seek advice on other types of employment if your skill is not presently in demand, or perhaps it can be adapted to some other job. And of course ask God to help you locate work. Then once you have a job, you are ready to put into action further practical instruction from the New Testament.

15. What did Paul teach regarding service to one's employer – one's boss, foreman or supervisor? Col 3:22-24, Tit 2:9-10.

Though Paul's instruction was specifically to Christians who were bond slaves at that time, the principles certainly apply today. Whatever your occupation may be, work at it as if your immediate boss were Jesus Christ Himself – “do it heartily, as to the Lord.” Be cooperative and zealous on the job. Be alert to please your foreman or boss by doing the job his way. And show your willingness to go beyond what is required.

Remember, too, that good personal relations on the job is one of the best forms of employment insurance. But a Christian shouldn't be a flatterer or a hypocrite in any sense. Show sincere, loving concern and cooperation toward your employer, your foreman and your fellow employees in every possible way.

16. Can one expect to be paid a good salary if he is not worth it? See the principle in Mark 4:24.

The way to receive a greater reward is to be worth more! Be a valuable employee.

Don't just plod along in your job with a ho-hum, humdrum, ever-day-the-same-routine attitude. Be energetic! Grow, produce! Study to improve your skills. Take some night classes and/or check out books on your line of work from the public library.

Really apply yourself and prove to your employer that you have the capacity and the will to work and to do an excellent job. Do your part and God will bless you.

17. What is a sluggard like to those who hire him? Prov 10:26.

He simply doesn't get the job done. Therefore he isn't paid much, if he can hold a job at all.

18. To whom is the sluggard instructed to go to study and learn about the initiative he lacks? Prov 6:6-9.

Many have never really understood the main point of this passage. Certainly it inculcated diligence. But notice verse 7. The ant not only works, but does so with “no leader, no foreman or chief” (Moffatt version).

Ants have a built-in, programmed ability to work diligently without prodding. Mankind, with the God-given ability to think and reason, should not only be able to do as well but infinitely better than these lower forms of life. A human should not have to be constantly supervised to do productive work. God is not supervised. We are to learn to be like Him.

19. Notice Proverbs 12:24. Who will become the leaders directing the rest of the workers? The “diligent”! And what will be the lot of the slothful? Same verse.

The slothful will be put to forced labor” (Revised Standard Version). Those who must be constantly supervised will be paid less than those who require little supervision. Do your job without being told. Or do it immediately when told how. Get it right the first time.

Be the kind of person who increases his supervisor’s production and the production of all his fellow workers. When the time comes for raises and promotions, this is the man or woman who will be remembered.

20. Will the man who is a self-starter – the man who really applies himself on the job without being prodded – find himself in the company of important people? Prov 22:29.

21. Was Joseph an industrious young man who was given greater responsibilities? Gen 39:2-6, 22-23, 41:40-44.

Are you willing to put forth the effort to be like Joseph? He was diligent. And though he was severely tried and tested for a time, he still obeyed God and God blessed him exceedingly. He eventually became prime minister of the entire land of Egypt, and will undoubtedly be given a high position in the soon-coming Kingdom of God (see Hebrews 11).

If you will really believe God and set yourself to follow His Word, striving to obey all of God’s commandments, He promises to bless you.

The apostle Paul sums it up in Hebrews 11:6: “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder (both spiritually and physically) of them that diligently seek him.”