



Your Attitude Toward Work

In the last few decades there has been a lot of emphasis on finding that occupation which your heart truly loves and pursuing that. To those who are able to find that in life, I say, "Hip, hip, hooray!" But most people don't get that privilege. They must work at something in which perhaps they don't find any real satisfaction. Certainly, to work every day at something one truly enjoys is an excellent thing, and worth pursuing if practical, but what if that is not the case?

The counsel of the wise is not necessarily to work at that which you love, but to work with a whole heart at whatever you find on your plate. In the context of a society in which slavery was the norm, the Apostle Paul advised the Colossians in chapter 3: 22-24, "Slaves, obey your masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for men, since you know you will receive your inheritance as reward from the Lord. You serve Christ the Lord."

In an era of self-absorption and insistence upon one's rights, such counsel seems out of place, but I believe we will see that it is truly the wise course. I remember reading about Gene Autry, the man who "made the San Fernando Valley" his home. He was a movie star, a recording star and entrepreneur from the 1930's and later. He was a rich man, and bought up the land in the San Fernando Valley, which is worth billions if not trillions of dollars today. He had worked at a lot of jobs before becoming a star, many of them menial. He said he never burned any bridges. If he had lost his fame and fortune, he could have gone back home and gone to work for his former employers because he worked faithfully and hard, and maintained good relations with his bosses.

These days people are searching for answers,

buying self-help books and in a puzzle about how to live in a satisfying way. Most don't realize that the answers lie in a book they probably have on the shelf - The Bible. The Bible is filled with excellent advice, not just for nurturing a relationship with God through Christ, but with infinitely practical advice on living well.

In particular, the book of Proverbs is packed with wise advice. Proverbs 10:4 says "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth." Proverbs 12:24 says "Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor." What is that saying? I believe it is saying that if you want to be in a successful position, you must learn to be diligent in your work. It makes no real difference whether your work is glamorous or humble in the eyes of your society; if you are diligent, not lazy about your work; if you are consistent, reliable and thorough in learning and applying the right methods, it will tend to elevate you financially and socially. Proverbs 22:29 says, "Do you see a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before obscure men."

When a man becomes known as a true professional in his occupation, one who knows his field of work and works with a whole-hearted attitude, who is reliable and steady and trustworthy, his opportunities steadily increase. His potential for greater income and more stature increases. Think about it: When you hire someone to do a job for you, such as work on your car, what kind of person do you want? Do you want a careless, ignorant, unreliable person to open up the motor and tinker? Or do you want an honest, knowledgeable, diligent person to work on that engine? Be the kind of person you would want to hire.

Perhaps some view their field of work as lower-class, or not as glamorous as other lines of work. So much depends on how you view that matter. The



Bible doesn't share that viewpoint. Proverbs 14:23 tells us, "In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty." There is so much wrapped up in that statement. This could be translated, "There is benefit in all forms of work, but just talking about it gets you nothing." Many people consider janitor work beneath them, but there are multi-billion dollar companies that render that service across the world.

Window cleaning seems to many to be a burdensome task, with few rewards, but there are companies making millions of dollars from that line of work. I assure you, when the CEO's of those companies go to dinner, they are welcomed along with the more glamorous people, and their money spends just as well.

Related to this thought is the concept of being self-reliant. It is my firm conviction that one should earn one's own money and possessions. The apostle Paul addressed this in his second letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 3, verses 6-12. He mentions that he and his companions were not idle, living off the work of others. He says, "We did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we did not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate....We gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat...Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living." Another translation says, "that they eat the bread they earn themselves."

God will provide for those who are willing to work, who make the effort to find employment to meet their needs and who seek His blessing. Jesus said, "My Father works until right now, and I work." Look around at the creation. Activity is everywhere. God is an active God, a Creator. We

are made in His image, to be like Him. Being active is part of being like Him. Activity brings many blessings and money is only one of those blessings. It is easily observable that physical activity is beneficial to the human body, as long as it is within the bounds of moderation, not extreme. The window cleaner finds that his repetitive reaching up, weaving back and forth in applying water, bending down and standing up, helps to keep his body trim, and his blood vessels clear. It is the same in many lines of work. The physical effort of working, bearing loads, walking, lifting all yield the benefit of pumping the blood and lubricating joints. These are very practical matters.

Persistence in these matters is important too. When the proverb says, "The diligent hand makes a man (or woman) rich," it is really saying quite a bit. Diligence here refers to a steady, continuing effort, an ongoing application of effort, not letting up one's application to the task, but maintaining one's steady effort to complete each task efficiently and effectively. While one needs to avoid pushing past the limits and exhausting oneself, one also needs to avoid being slack, lazy and unproductive.

Of course, one must also apply Biblical principles in the handling of finances, but that is a subject for another message.

We welcome your comments. If you would like to help support this effort write to:

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