

DIVINE LABOR

Work, Worship & Witness

By Dennis Peacocke



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What if your workplace is not separate from your spiritual life, but one of its primary expressions? In God's eyes, work, worship, and witness are inseparable. How we behave in the workplace becomes a living testimony of Christ. Work is not a curse to escape or merely a paycheck to survive on; it is part of God's intentional design for humanity. It is an invitation for us to partner with Him and others, express our God-given gifts and creativity, and be formed into maturity. What an incredible opportunity we have as believers to bless those around us as we walk out our assignments. This study invites you to discover your divine calling in labor, embrace a Christ-centered work ethic, and redefine success through the lens of the Kingdom of God.



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www.gostrategic.org | info@gostrategic.org

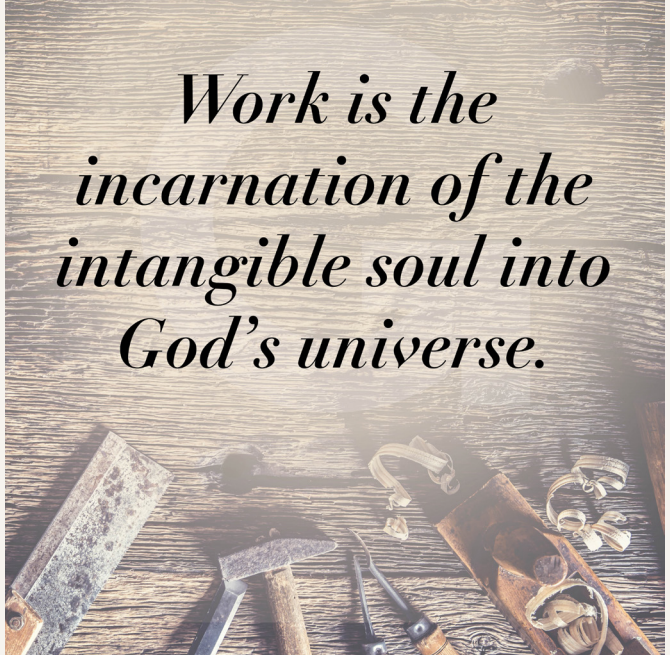


1 | Work is Worship

Have you noticed how we as Christians will cross continents and move heaven and earth to do missions work, yet ironically seem to miss one of the most potent forms of evangelism at our disposal? How many of us approach our jobs as if Christ Himself were our boss? If we evangelized through responsible sweat and honest zeal to make our colleagues successful, Christianity would gain center stage within the cultures of the world. Sadly, too many Christians are polluted with “weekend syndrome” which views hard work as a curse, the boss as an antagonist, and serving as an indignity. For them, the goal is Saturday and Sunday—the anticipated reprieve from the sentence of hard labor!

Few realize that *avodah*, the Hebrew word for both *work* and *worship*, implies that our daily labor is an act of service to God. We struggle to see work as worship, yet from God’s perspective, the two are not separate. How do they become one? The answer is, by working on what God has called us to do. Doing business God’s way is living life God’s way.

Work is the incarnation of the intangible soul into God’s universe; it allows the inside of me to be revealed to the outside world. Who do you suppose perceives the “real you” most clearly—your pastor who sees you a few hours per week on your best behavior, or your boss who sees you eight hours per day when you’re feeling good, bad, or ugly? Suffice it to say, work reveals your soul.



*Work is the
incarnation of the
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God’s universe.*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

*Whatever you do, do your work heartily,
as for the Lord rather than for men.*

—COLOSSIANS 3:23

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters,
stand firm. Let nothing move you.
Always give yourselves fully to the work
of the Lord, because you know that your
labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

—1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

What an incredible opportunity we have as believers to express Christ to those we work with—not necessarily with bold statements or evangelistic programs, but in simply being conscious of our role in the workplace and working as unto the Lord. ^



2 | Discovering Our Divine Labor

Labor is the process through which we reveal our internal reality to the external world. Our labor reflects and reveals our character, disciplines, views of excellence, commitment to service, and active grasp of God-ordained gifts and passions. I have maintained for decades that “God pays for what He orders.” This means there are divine reservoirs of energy and creativity waiting to be released into our labor through the gifts and life passions stirring within our redeemed hearts. As we see and embrace what our Creator has put within us, our ministry and worship fuse into what we call work or labor. All work, if assigned by God, is holy.

In discovering our assigned labor, there are clues to follow. What patterns of passion were alive in us even before we knew God? We may have engaged in parts of our calling, distorted as they may have been, even when we were in the world, so to speak. Ask the Holy Spirit and those you know and trust:

- What skills or passions do you see in me that seem to bring me to life?
- How do you see me adding value to people and bringing life out of them?

Questions like these will lead us to discoveries so obvious, we will marvel that we did not see them sooner. Do you love to teach, serve, create, or build with your hands? What



*It's never too late
to find your calling
and invest in it.*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

In His defense Jesus said to them, “My father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working”. . . Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” —JOHN 5:17,19

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.

—HEBREWS 4:1

May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands. —PSALM 90:17

hobbies have always given you joy or a special sense of excitement? What kind of work would you do if the world were yours?

It's never too late to find your calling and invest in it. God is committed to helping us answer these questions and live out the answers. When we're in our assigned labor, we can sense God's pleasure when we work. Those who are already there know exactly what I am saying. Your labor fits you, and you fit it.

Another way to frame this is that every believer should engage daily in what we might call "authorized labor." This was the only kind of labor Jesus engaged in—doing what the Father ordained from the heavenly realm and bringing it to the earthly realm. Entering God's assigned labor also helps us learn how to "enter His rest" (see Hebrews 4). There is purpose and peace in doing what we are called to do! ^



3 | What is Success?

It is a natural desire within humanity to want to be successful. But what is success? The world is full of books, videos, conferences, and coaches that will guarantee our success if we only follow them. But success in God is not about money, fame, fortune, or accolades. Success is about seeking first the Kingdom of God, which ultimately means loving Him above all and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

God intentionally designed each of us with unique gifts, tailor-made for us to flourish. Success, therefore, is discovering our specific calling and living it out with energy and gratitude. We cannot be truly successful living a life designed for someone else; only by walking God's unique path for us will we find true success.

It is impossible to talk about success without addressing the issue of money. The question is not how much we earn, but whether we have enough money to fulfill our God-ordained mission, the lifestyle He has set for us, and the ability to sow into His Kingdom work as He directs. Prosperity, or the lack thereof, should be measured relative to our calling.

Ultimately, success is fulfilling our obedience to God and acquiring the skill sets and character traits He desires us to carry into eternity. We must yield our will to His, trusting what He has for us. Obedience driven by faith leads to ultimate contentment and true success. ^



*Ultimate success is
walking in obedience
to God.*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your
soul and with all your mind."*

*This is the first and greatest
commandment. And the second is like it:
"Love your neighbor as yourself."*

—MATTHEW 22:37-39

*Commit to the Lord whatever you do,
and he will establish your plans.*

—PROVERBS 16:3

*But seek first his kingdom and his
righteousness, and all these things will be
given to you as well. —MATTHEW 6:33*



4 | Winning Through Work

How often do you find yourself complaining about having to work? We may dislike work or view it as a temporary evil or curse, but God Himself delights in it. He finds life in laboring. In Genesis, God reveals Himself as Creator and Worker, inviting Adam and Eve to work with Him to tend the garden, classify and train the animals, and likely discuss work projects with Him in the cool of the day. Jesus tells us that His Father is always working, and so is He (John 5:17 NKJV). Even from His youth, Jesus expressed His devotion to the Father's purposes, saying that He must be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49 NKJV).

Although there are brothers and sisters who are tremendous workers with serving hearts, there are ultimately too few. For many, witnessing is limited to talk; rarely is it manifested through the life they have deposited into their labor. So much of modern Christendom has lost its work ethic. They have turned Jesus into an absentee landowner who cares little about what His stewards do with His planet, assuming His main concern is their happiness. What heresy! The Bible never indicates that true happiness can be discovered apart from being productive in Christ's vineyard. The further modern man distances himself from investing his life into productive work, the more neurotic and alienated he becomes.



*Deliver us, O God,
from the weekend
syndrome so that we
can find the week!*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

—GENESIS 2:15

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. — GENESIS 2:19

By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. — JOHN 15:8

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.

—COLOSSIANS 3:23

And so much of the Church, in its mad dash for the ultimate “vacation in the sky,” has lost sight of: “By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples” (John 15:8 NASB 1977).

Anyone who is physically able and spiritually healthy should embrace their work. To despise work or approach it sloppily is a carnal disease. While miracles may wow people, caring and earnest labor do far more to convert them. It wasn’t experiencing Jesus’ miracles that prepared people to endure times of testing; it was sweating alongside Him and walking closely with a selfless life that gave unceasingly so that others could be freed into their ultimate destinies. Our society, and sadly far too many Christians, have a job ethic but lack the biblical work ethic. I may go to a job, but I am my work.

Those who are employers know full well what I am saying: Good workers in the land of escapism and “rights” are hard to find. Oh, that Christians would work “as unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:23 ASV) and fill the void. Praise God for evangelists on the street corner. Praise God for the living witness of a Man who loved His work and calls us to join Him in the yoke of sweat and toil. Deliver us, O God, from the weekend syndrome so that we can find the week! ^



5 | Make Yourself Fireproof—Part 1

If we as believers are “working heartily as unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:23 ASV), we should be the best work force out there! Are we consciously stewarding and growing our skills in the workplace? Shouldn't we aspire to be among the last ones considered if layoffs occur? In today's economic climate, virtually everyone should endeavor to “fireproof” their job, making themselves and their job-related functions as essential and valuable as possible.

So how do we do this? How do we begin to “fireproof” our jobs? It begins with three simple presuppositions:

1. God wants His children gainfully employed where their callings and gifts bring value to others.
2. God wants to expand His Kingdom and its citizens through us at work.
3. Effective and specific prayer both changes us and creates opportunities and results when applied in faith.

STEP 1: UPGRADE YOUR ATTITUDES

- **Bring faith to work with you.** We create an “atmosphere” wherever we go. What do you bring to work? Is it optimism, energy, and a problem-solving outlook, or comments about how much you wish the weekends were longer and the workdays shorter?



God desires that His children use their callings and gifts in meaningful work that benefits others.

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than ourselves.

—PHILIPPIANS 2:3

All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

—PROVERBS 14:23

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

—1 TIMOTHY 2:1-2

- **Become an encourager and drop out of the complainers' club.** Don't join in with those who use sarcasm and ill humor to pass the day or who reinforce the whiners at work.
- **Edify your colleagues and the authority figures around you.** If you're truly working as unto the Lord, you can trust Him with your work and your future. If you are not working as unto the Lord, it's time to examine your heart and priorities. Remember, God fully knows the condition of your heart, the attitudes you display, and the values you bring to work, even if your boss may not. God is ultimately the One you must please.

STEP 2: REVAMP YOUR WORK ETHIC

- **Aspire (pray) to new levels of productivity and efficiency.** No employer in their right mind will quickly release anyone who seriously cares and walks out such an attitude and commitment.
- **Become personally concerned and committed to the success of your company's products and services.** Pray for new contracts, customers, workplace effectiveness, and profit margins.
- **Go the extra mile in terms of effort, excellence, and availability.** Serve and work above and beyond what is expected of you or simply your job description.

In summary, your attitudes and work ethic are important for both your integrity and your witness. In tomorrow's devotional, we will examine our skill sets and our ability and commitment to encourage and connect with others. ^



6 | Make Yourself Fireproof—Part 2

As we have established, you must first be the type of person that others want to work with and can trust. Good attitudes, a strong work ethic, and overall integrity are crucial for employees to become essential. Upon that foundation of character and personality, we then add skill sets and relational competencies.

STEP 3: ELEVATE YOUR SKILL SETS

- **Ask your superiors what kind of training, study materials, or counsel they can recommend to upgrade your skill sets and increase your value to the company.** Whatever they suggest, endeavor to do it. If nothing else, you are sincere and they know it. Your sincerity and willingness to grow will demonstrate your commitment and make you a more valuable member of the team.
- **Ask those who are successful in their jobs where they went for insight and the keys to their success.** As Proverbs 19:20 teaches, "Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future."
- **Seek ways to help upgrade the skill sets of those around you.** Anyone who helps others become more successful catches both God's and others' attention.

Christians should work in a way that makes them among the most reliable and valued members of any team.



KEY SCRIPTURES:

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

—HEBREWS 11:1

Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank.

—PROVERBS 22:29

Iron sharpens iron; so one person sharpens another. —PROVERBS 27:17

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

—EPHESIANS 4:29

STEP 4: RECALIBRATE YOUR RELATIONAL SKILLS

- **Work efficiencies are the result of workable team building and the relational health of the organization.** Both God and man promote team players and relational bridge builders. Ask God and those who give you counsel to help you see how to go to the next level relationally.
- **Seek to remove from yourself negative hindrances to your personal relational I.Q.** Become a better listener. Communicate your concern to others wisely; stop gossiping or trashing others in any way.
- **Ask God to help you become an effective problem solver.**

While the list may go on, these four steps are key to pursuing excellence and increasing your value in the workplace. Your work and your witness are inextricably linked. Christians should work in a way that makes them among the most reliable and valued members of any team. Excellent work and dedication may not guarantee immunity from layoffs or job loss; however, the integrity, character, and skills you develop remain with you. This personal and professional growth continues to reflect the biblical standard of working as unto the Lord. 



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