

# Biblical View of Work

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[ 0 : 00 ] This morning, our lesson is about having a biblical worldview on the topic of work. I can't think of a topic that has changed so dramatically and so rapidly as that of our culture's view of work in just the past couple years.

So that's where we want to begin. What is our culture's current worldview on work? Let me begin with my own personal experience.

I worked in human resources for 40 plus years at a local foundry. Not an easy environment to work in. To keep a workforce of about 200, I would hire 125 to 140 workers every year.

Over that course of 40 plus years. But suddenly in 2018, workers became much more difficult for me to find. And so I began going up to the homeless shelter and hiring workers there.

As well as standing out in the street. I felt like a street evangelist. Sometimes I'd have people lined up 8, 10 deep. Just out in the street in front of the homeless.

[ 1 : 24 ] And unannounced. They knew I came every Thursday. And they just line up and I'm hiring people as fast as I can. I also started working with prison relief, release programs.

And I was like to go out and give them another copy of that attendance record.

And I would highlight the area where they were in trouble on to make sure they knew where they stood. But so one day, I go up to Joe.

And I said, Joe, today is the third time you've been tardy this week. Do you know what that means?

And Joe's kind of half asleep and he looks at me.

And he says, it must be only Wednesday? Wednesday? Well, in 2018 and 19, I hired over 400 workers in each of those years just to maintain a workforce of 200.

[ 2 : 43 ] I retired in February of 2020, the age of 67. And the very next month of March, the pandemic hit. Three months later, I stopped in at the foundry.

And the owner said he had 105 open positions. That was over half of our workforce gone. And that was in spite of raising their starting wage.

I would have to fight to get a quarter a year for the workers. They raised their starting wage \$7 an hour. In the three months, I was gone and stopped even taking attendance records.

Well, by far the most familiar sign in our country. What was it? What is it? Help wanted. Hiring now.

And soon after that, we began seeing, please be patient as we are short-staffed.

25 years ago, Paula Cole sang a song. Where have all the cowboys gone? And I want to know, so where did all the workers go?

[ 3 : 53 ] It was easy for me to blame it all on the millennials. Yeah, that's that generation of kids who entered the workforce in the last 20 years with that attitude of entitlement and the infinite wisdom of Dr. Rick Fish that he shared with us a few weeks ago.

Parents got to quit giving their kids everything. I've always agreed with Rick's wisdom, and much of it is the parents' fault. But as well, we lack parents in the home.

This past Father's Day, 20 million children did not have a dad in their home. Another major contributor, video games.

The average teenage boy spends approximately three hours a day working on his work ethic. But I can't blame it all on millennials, because we can actually trace non-biblical work views all the way back to my generation.

In the 70s, what song did Johnny Paycheck make popular? What was it? Take this job and shove it.

[ 5 : 14 ] In the 60s and 70s, we're known for promoting anti-authority views. And that certainly carried over to the next generation and how they would respond to their boss, telling them something to do.

Well, the pandemic was the perfect storm that revealed our culture's view of work. It was like a culmination where many of these contributing factors came together, and everything just seemed to explode.

In 2021, just last year, 47 million people quit or left their jobs. And to give you an idea, I mean, once you get into millions, what's that mean?

Well, last month, there were 133 million full-time workers in our country. So 47 million last year quit. That's over a third of our workforce either quit or left their jobs. Why? Well, a lot of reasons, but due to COVID, or fear of COVID, a lot of early retirement skyrocketed.

[ 6 : 25 ] Due to school closing, many mothers left the workforce to stay home. And once they found out what their children were learning, many of them never went back to work.

And then our government pushed for the termination of workers who refused to be vaccinated. And I have to say, our government was definitely a major contributor to this problem.

But I need to remember, the government reflects our culture. They're not just in something out there. They do what reflects our culture.

And without going into a lot of detail, I'm just going to bring up the one issue of unemployment benefits, where the biblical view is that if a person is able to work, then we shouldn't be taking care of them, unless it's like a crisis, like hurricane.

But Proverbs says a person's hunger is the best motivation to push them to go out and look for a job. But our federal government decided to enhance unemployment benefits in three primary ways.

[ 7 : 41 ] Number one, all you had to do is quit your job and say that it was due to COVID. You didn't need any proof, you didn't need any proof, and you could receive unemployment benefits.

That had never happened in our history. And you no longer had to go out and look for a job.

Number two, instead of six months of benefits, many states increased it to 18 months of benefits.

When you're out of work for a year and a half, not working, it's tough to get a desire to go back to work. And then they increased the amount of those benefits substantially, so much so that 68% of the people receiving unemployment were making more staying at home than they were working. Add to that fact, all the money that was given out through stimulus checks, you know, so people could buy necessities like food and pay their rent and utility and purchase new saddles for their horses.

I remember being, praying regularly, scared my son's going to lose his job because in a crisis, nobody needs a saddle. And yet he had his best year ever.

[ 9 : 08 ] I just kept asking myself, what is behind all this? And I barely had to search and scratch the surface in my research, and was it ever eye-opening?

And just in a nutshell, this counterculture that is swept across our nation is challenging the value of a good work ethic.

And here are some of the actual words that I was reading. No one should have to work hard in order to survive. Hard work is no longer an honorable thing.

It is no longer true that producing more means you're a better worker. In fact, producing more is bad.

Why? Because you're just making the rich richer. It's okay to go to work and just do enough to get by.

[ 10 : 16 ] And I read a recent survey last week that they estimate 30% of our workforce does just that when they go to work. Recently, a California lawmaker proposed a mandatory 32-hour work week, meaning that you cannot work your workers more than 32 hours a week, but you must pay them for 40.

It's interesting that Jesus' story about workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20, he has them working a 12-hour work shift.

And our God in the fourth commandment says, six days you shall labor. You definitely should not be making young people have to work while they're going to college.

You need to give them free college. And almost everything I was reading becomes a right that the government must provide. It's that top-down philosophy that Aaron Shavey taught us that has never made a country prosperous.

And if the government fails to supply something you need, and I couldn't believe I was reading this, then it's okay to steal it.

[ 11 : 41 ] And in San Francisco now it's okay to shoplift as long as you don't exceed \$958. I learned all kinds of new words this past year.

Flash mob, where a large group of people, anywhere from 20 to 100, each grab a large plastic bag, rush into the store at the same time, and grab all they can get and get out in one minute.

Jugging. Just read about this this past week or two. Do you need some cash? Watch a person withdraw money from a bank or an ATM machine.

Follow them home and then rob them. Carjacking. I'd heard of that, but now it's the crime of carjacking is just ramping way up.

If you need a ride somewhere, beat up an older person coming out of a grocery store. Just take their keys and drive across town. Couch surfing.

[ 12 : 44 ] Don't have a place to sleep. Mooch off of friends. Just go from one couch to another. Better yet, move back in with dad and mom.

They're now calling this generation the boomerang generation. They estimate that 80% of college grads are now moving back home, most without a job.

So homelessness has exploded and is a major problem. Legalizing drugs, I believe, is contributing to our lack of workers. And I was wondering the other day, now that unemployment benefits for many have run out, how are these people paying for things without a job?

And so right away I thought, oh, I'll bet I know. And sure enough, I looked up credit card debt and it is skyrocketing.

Just in the last quarter, the last three months, credit card debt went up \$46 billion. Questions? Questions?

[ 14 : 04 ] Or any brief comments? I can't have any war stories, which we could all probably tell about our work history. But that is basically where our culture is right now concerning work ethic.

Any comments, Jim? With the boomers going out of work, because they're old enough, they're 67, 66, 67, how is that affecting the loss of people?

Well, I would assume, along with early retirements, that yes, there are a ton of people that have reached our age, Jim, and have decided, although I've also seen just this past week with inflation, that there are a number of older people that are now looking to get back into the workforce.

But yes, the fact that we've got this baby boomer generation retiring is going to put a real load on Social Security and Medicare.

Kim? Isn't there a word that encapsulates all of it? Pardon? Isn't there a word that defines all of it? Marxism?

[ 15 : 26 ] Well, that would be one. And the goal is to destroy what we have in the world. Yes. And that's that top down. Mm-hmm.

Because that was Marx's thing. He was anti-war. I would agree with you. Other comments?

So how is the Christian to view work? And what are some of the subtle ways that the world's thoughts affect our thinking? And that's what I mainly want us to look at.

Think of the rest of this time like taking your car in for a tune-up. Check your thoughts in for a tune-up during this last part of the lesson.

And it's all stuff that we know, but that we can tend to let slip. So pull in for your first tune-up. Have you ever thought or said, thank God it's Friday?

[ 16 : 38 ] Have you ever had the idea that the ideal life is a life free from work? That if only I could retire at age 50, that would be the ultimate?

Or just thought of work as a necessary evil. You know, I've got to do this to provide for my family.

Aaron Shavey did a good job of showing us how before sin entered the world in Genesis 3, our God was working.

And in Genesis 1 and 2, he also ordained for Adam and Eve to work. So work is not a result of the curse.

Rather, work was God's creative purpose for man. That means that work is an expression of who we are as created in the image of God.

And it is one of the primary ways that we are to glorify God and serve Him and serve others. This radically changed my whole attitude toward work in November of 1988.

[ 17 : 53 ] How do I remember that date? I have 48 pages of notes from our pastor's studies on work.

And anything taught from here on out basically comes from those notes. But it made a huge difference in my life.

I think we'll work in heaven. Don't ask me for details. Don't ask me for details. Don't ask me for details. Don't ask me for details. But we sing, blessings will flow far as the curse is found.

You say, well, I thought we were going to be worshiping in heaven. Well, according to Romans 12.1, our day of work is spiritual worship.

But when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, there's no question that the curse definitely affected work in Genesis chapter 3.

[ 19 : 02 ] Work now often requires painful toil. Thorns and thistles have found their way into every factory, every store, every home, every workplace on earth.

John Ladig was Scott's grandpa. And I remember the story that as he was pulling weeds in the field with his father, the sun beating down on them, he could hear his dad say, Oh, Adam, what have you done?

And it's not only that the curse makes work painful toil, but sin separated man from his creator. And when man fell, the curse hit him where it hurt most, his primary calling in life. He lost the ultimate purpose for his work to glorify God.

And now work for many has become purposeless and lacks meaning. You can read in Ecclesiastes, the author is battling depression when he thinks about his work.

[ 20 : 24 ] He expresses his frustration concerning the meaninglessness of work. You know, you spend most of your waking hours working.

You go to bed and you wake up just to do it all over again. Might as well be chasing after the wind, he says. But how I thank God for 1 Peter 1.18.

It says, we were redeemed from that empty way of life. We're not caught in that hamster wheel that just keeps doing that meaningless over and over.

Christ's redemption restored my purpose for living and gave all those hours of labor new meaning.

So I had a six block ride to work on my bike every day. And I think I rode my bike to work 98% of the time, including January and February.

[ 21 : 34 ] And it was just enough time for me to get pumped up and passionate about my grand purpose for living that I learned about way back in November of 1988.

And so I ask you, are you passionate about your opportunity to glorify God as you work?

And along with that, how are you dealing with the curse at your work? Some of you have it really difficult.

There's a lot of pressure and stress in your work. There's people problems, long hours. About five years before I retired, my job was getting harder and harder.

And my body was having difficulty keeping up with the demands and all the effects of the curse.

And God challenged me from Hebrews 11 one day, that as a Christian, I'm to be a person living by faith, not just trusting my own abilities to get my job done.

[ 22 : 53 ] I mean, I've been doing the same job for 40 some years. And thought I was pretty good at it. But now, and I thought I'd work till I was at least 70.

But now the effects of the curse, both with the view of work ethic in our culture, as well as the effects of curse on my own body, I realized I haven't been trusting God like I ought to.

So I began each day by writing across my calendar book at the top. I'd write a question. What am I trusting God for today?

What challenges are before me that I can turn over to Him? What opportunities to see God work for my good?

Yes, the curse has made work difficult, but God has not left us to wallow under the curse. So are you walking by faith and dealing with the curse at your work site?

[ 24 : 04 ] Tune up number two. Do you ever complain about your boss? That seems to be a national favorite pastime.

Or ever have the thought that today would be a good day to slack off since the boss is gone today?

Or ever said, you know what my supervisor is telling me to do is not in my job description.

Do I have to do that? Or here's a tough one. Does your smile at work reveal that you enjoy working for your incredible boss?

I'm going to say that one again. Does your smile at work reveal that you enjoy working for your incredible boss? You say, well, you've obviously never met my boss.

And actually, I do know him personally. Turn in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3. Colossians 3 is a parallel passage to Ephesians 5 and 6 where the Apostle Paul is describing what it looks like to live life filled with the Holy Spirit.

[ 25 : 31 ] And here in Colossians 3, we have a description of what it looks like to work spirit-filled.

Colossians chapter 3, I'll begin at verse 22. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything. So obey in everything.

Don't say, that's not my job description. You're the kind of worker that goes, does it all, and maybe even over the top. And how is the Christian to go about his work?

And do it not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart. So we're to be wholehearted workers. We're to be the top producer in the shop if you have that ability to do that.

[ 26 : 37 ] Don't do just enough to get by. And work with the same diligence whether your boss is watching you or not.

Because why? The end of verse 23. As working for the Lord, not for men. Christian, your primary motivation for working is to be working because I'm working for Him.

not even for a paycheck. Yes, we need to provide for our family. But our primary motivation when we go to work is we get to work for the Lord.

And I ask you, is that how you've been thinking at your work? Verse 24. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

Lord. And then he states it plainly again. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. He's talking about when you're at the workplace.

[ 27 : 49 ] It is the Lord Christ you are serving. In human resources, in HR, we pay attention to what the top 10 companies in the state of Indiana, what are the top 10 companies to work for in the state of Indiana and why?

Because we want to be one of those. Well, Christian, your boss is not in the top 10.

He's the number one in the world. Do you ever think about that? I get to go to work for the top boss in the world today.

What motivates you the most? And, you know what? It's no difference if you are the boss at work. Look at 4.1.

Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair. Why? Because you know that you also have a master in heaven.

[ 29 : 03 ] So even if you're the boss, you also have a boss to answer to. And you, too, work for the number one boss in the world.

Do you ever look at your work day that way? Well, when you view work this way as serving the Lord, it changes how you go about your work.

You go into the work with a sense of calling and dignity because God sees what I'm doing today and it matters to Him.

Have you been thinking biblically about your work? As you get up tomorrow, do you have any sense of, wow, today I'm going to work for the King of Kings and I'm going to seek to glorify Him in every aspect that He brings my way.

I want to just mention to us retired people because I see quite a few of us that our culture puts an emphasis on the fact that you have worked hard all your life and now you deserve to fill it with leisure and pleasure.

[ 30 : 24 ] Well, you, too, have a master every morning that you get up to go to work for. And we heard from our brother Naphtali two weeks ago as he preached that he gives you a talent and he says don't bury it.

Retirees, don't bury it. Use that time and opportunity to serve your King. One of Pastor John's quotes that I found in his notes, age 65 is not a magical age where idleness is no longer a sin.

age 65 is not a magical age where idleness is no longer a sin. All right, our third and final tune-up.

Turn back to Proverbs chapter 24. Proverbs chapter 24. You know, the book of Proverbs has much wisdom about work.

Proverbs 31. We right away think of the godly woman. And much of her noble character is described by her hard work ethic.

[ 31 : 45 ] Verse after verse after verse. And so I ask, housewives, do you have a Godward perspective as you go about changing diapers, washing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning the house?

It's easy to think, well, I'm working to please my husband or to take care of my children. But is your perspective a Godward perspective?

What motivates you to be the best housewife you can be? Also, over and over, the Proverbs warn about the sluggard and the consequences of being a lazy person as well as the result of the blessings of being diligent in your work.

The general principle of Proverbs 14.23, all hard work brings a profit. Well, Proverbs 24 is the lesson of the little.

Have you learned the lesson of the little? verse 30. Solomon is taking a walk one day and as he passes a vineyard, he makes an observation.

[ 33 : 06 ] I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of a man who lacks judgment. Thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.

Now, I don't know if Solomon knew this owner, but he couldn't help but realizing that there was a lesson to be learned in what he saw.

Verse 32, I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw. And then in verse 33 and 34, there an exact quote from the principle he laid down back in Proverbs chapter 6, verse 10 and 11.

But now he's applying it to real life. Verses 33 and 34. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come on you like abandon and scarcity like an armed man. whenever we want to try to understand what's the lesson God's trying to teach me here, often repetition will help us understand that lesson.

[ 34 : 37 ] A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands. This clearly applies to our work habits and how we go about our day.

Let me encourage you who are parents with children in the house. Are you training your children to learn the value of the little?

Are you giving them age-appropriate chores and then following up to make sure it's done right? It's tough to be consistent.

It's very easy to overlook the little. I bless God for a mother who taught me the lesson of the little. It's also how I learned my middle name. Often my job was to go out and pick beans. Only two or three rows in the little garden we had in the backyard.

[ 35 : 41 ] But that interrupted my playtime something fierce. And besides that, somehow green beans are exceptionally good at hide and seek.

So I would pick the beans, run them into the house and head back out to play. And pretty soon I'd hear Stanley James!

And with a hand on the back of my neck gently pushing me down to that first bean plant she would show me three or four beans that somehow grew in the last ten minutes.

and would make me do those rows all over. But eventually I learned my middle name and learned that it was better to do the job right the first time.

And that's all part of obedience doing it. Now doing it all and with the right heart attitude. But the lesson is this.

[ 36 : 49 ] Overlooking the little is the slippery slope to poverty. And I want to encourage us as well because I know I need it to apply it as well in our spiritual life.

It's easy to let things slip a little. And overlooking the little and soon we're in a spiritual state that isn't close to God like we ought to be.

Well in closing I just want to say sadly there will be many in hell with a strong work ethic. A strong work ethic does not save you.

Only Jesus saves us. There are going to be people in hell that had a strong work ethic like the rich farmer in Luke 12 who worked hard all his life until he retired when he could take life easy eat drink and be merry.

But God told him you fool this very night you must give an account for your soul. And Jesus final application was that this is how it will be for everyone who lives life for himself and not for the glory of God because motives matter to God.

[ 38 : 19 ] You are dismissed. Thank you.