

At a glance

God's Word stresses the importance of holding a higher standard in all we do, including our career.



"I owe, I owe, so off to work I go!" That's the attitude many of us have about our jobs or careers. We sometimes consider it a necessary evil and dread to return to it at the end of a vacation. No one ever says, "I can't wait to get back to work!" Could it be that we haven't surrendered our careers to the Lord?

Genesis 2:15 says, “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the _____ of Eden to _____ it and _____ it.”

Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word for dress is *abad* which means to serve or do service, labor or work. It could be that the definition of labor or work was changed. Because of the fall of Adam and Eve, God cursed the ground. It produced thorns and thistles and work became a sorrow. The Bible tells us “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:17b). Mankind was sentenced to exhausting labor in order to provide for himself. Even Sophocles said, “Without labor nothing prospers.”

Read Exodus 20:9-11. We are reminded that God planned for our labor to be done in six days and rest on the seventh day. God gave us this pattern to follow. God made us and knows what our bodies can stand. Psalm 103:14 says, “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”

Do you think tending the garden before the fall seemed effortless?

How do you think Adam felt when he experienced the difficulty in working the land after the curse had been pronounced?

Work was the divine idea of God. Has this plan for mankind changed? Reference 1 Timothy 5:8.



The Call

A speaker once told a graduating class of high school seniors, “Choose a job that you absolutely love because you’re going to be doing that job a long time.” Young men and women

choose a career early these days; in fact, students are challenged to select a vocation by fifth grade. It was not so during Bible times. Young men grew up helping their fathers either farming, doing carpentry work, fishing, etc. Young women became homemakers and mothers following their own mother's example.

We find several young men who kept with tradition and followed in their father's footsteps. List the name of the father and four fishermen mentioned in Matthew 4:18-22.

1. _____ Father: _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Jesus confronted these four young men with this challenge: "Follow Me." This was not a suggestion; it was a command. "Your place is in following after me," Jesus told them. He urged them to leave their job for an unknown future. It was said they immediately left and followed Jesus. That's not the only time the "follow challenge" was made. Read Genesis 12:1-9. What two verbal commands did God issue to Abram? Leave...and go.



The Challenge

Whatever the position to which God has called you, a work ethic must be met. Sam Ewing said, "Hard work spotlights the character of people: some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don't turn up at all."

Not only are we to be on time, we're supposed to do our job. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). It's now or never to show our character whether in good or bad circumstances

Margaret Thatcher noted: "Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It's not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it's when you've had everything to do, and you've done it."

Read Ruth 2:1-7. In the book of Ruth, we find that the Moabitess had an outstanding work ethic. It appears Ruth didn't let her "foreign" background and possible discrimination stop her from providing for Naomi and herself. She headed out early in the morning and worked steadily all day. Boaz paid a visit and was attracted to her because of her looks, but she impressed the supervisor by her hard work and determination. *No get rich quick* scheme for her.

God was going to provide for Ruth, but her obedience and hard work put her in the right place for God's provision and blessing. Having the health and strength to do a day's work is a gift from God. How wonderful to go to bed tired from doing a good day's work for a good day's pay.

How did the supervisor speak of Ruth's work ethic?

Does God still honor a good work ethic? How?

In years gone by, it was common to be hired by a company and work there until retirement. Times have changed for some, while others are content to stay the course. As years pass, however, God may call you into different positions or vocations. If we're unhappy in our current position, change is welcome.

What about when we're satisfied and want nothing to change, but God closes that chapter? Answering God's call will probably involve change in our lives, attitude, and motivation. Training, further education, and proper instruction may be required, but with God's help, we can accomplish His goals for our lives.

Many people do secular jobs to earn a livelihood. Do you believe God calls us to these positions and why?

Does God always leave us in the same place of labor for our entire lives? Your thoughts:



The Choice

A call has perhaps been placed before us—so what should we do? It is a fact that doing God's will typically comes with a struggle. In reading Genesis 12:1-5, do you suppose Sarai told Abram that she didn't sign up for all that traveling and was happy just to drive those tent pegs deep and stay in Haran for the long haul? What about when you're doing a job and you feel as though it's more than you can handle?

First, yield your life, and in this case, your job to His will and let Him plan your life. Jeremiah 29:11 says that God knows the plans He has for you, plans to prosper and not harm you, to give you a future and a hope.

Second, continue with faith believing that God knows best. It may mean leaving the familiar and going into the unknown. It may mean that family won't understand. Deciding to answer God's call in compliance with His will makes the turmoil in our hearts cease and is replaced with peace and satisfaction that surpasses understanding. There's a sense within yourself that you are where you're supposed to be.

Have you ever had to make a work decision your family didn't understand?

Once a decision is made to follow Christ's leading, have you ever experienced the peace that passes understanding? Explain.

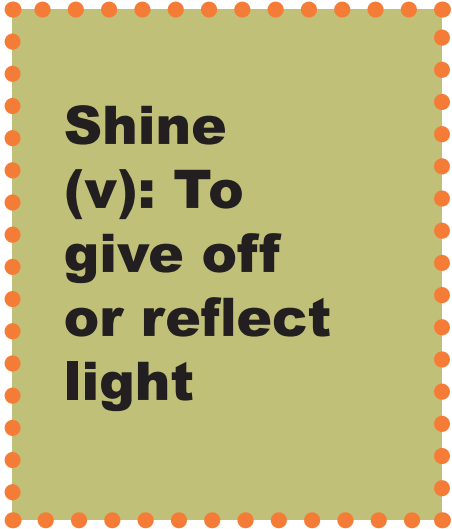
Will you follow Jesus and work in the place He has chosen?

God's commission is laid out in Acts 1:8: "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." While Jesus is the Light of the World, we are also called to be lights on a hill. Those lights can't shine if they're hidden inside the church. We must share the gospel through the world's system.

Do you see your job as your calling? Thank God for those who have answered the call to ministry and missionary service. They provide leadership and service more than 40 hours a week. It will also involve being available to listen to a broken heart during the wee hours of the night, answering the questions of a seeking heart, and being an example for others to follow. The people around you will recognize God's presence in your life as you serve Him. Take a moment and pray for those who are in Christian service.

Do you see your job as your calling? Thank God for those who have been called to serve at home or in secular fields of service knowing their lights can shine brightly in the darkness. The world needs nurses who will comfort women in labor and delivery or console those who are dying in the ER and ICU. God needs the witness of Christian accountants and office managers so owners can have confidence their company is being managed in an honorable manner. What if all the Christian teachers pulled out of the secular school system?

You may not always see the good in the place God has placed you. Joseph didn't understand the good in being mistreated by his brothers, placed in a pit, sold to a caravan of Ishmaelites, and bought by Potiphar as a servant. In all that happened to him, however, Joseph was exactly where God wanted him. What appeared as evil or bad was actually designed for Joseph's good. You too can reap the reward if you stay faithful.




**Shine
(v): To
give off
or reflect
light**

AUGUST STUDY

Record every mention that includes “the Lord” in Genesis 39:1-12.
I’ll get you started:

Verse 2	the Lord	was with Joseph
Verse 3a	the Lord	
Verse 3b	the Lord	
Verse 5a	the Lord	
Verse 5b	the blessing of the Lord	

Wherever God calls you, work as unto the Lord. He is honored and glorified when we are faithful witnesses of Him in the workplace.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17). Amen. 

About the Writer: Jody Sullivan lives in Huntington, West Virginia, and has been the Women Active for Christ state president for 21 years. She is a member of Prince of Peace Free Will Baptist Church and is office manager of a Christian radio station. Jody has two daughters and two grandchildren