

July 2, 2018
By Rick Boxx

Working Hard - For The Right Reasons

Jeff was the new CEO of a chain of jewelry stores. One of his first challenges was to evaluate the performances for all of the national chain's branches. As he was reviewing the results for each branch with his executive team, he became puzzled about one particular store.

This had been company's best performing store, but suddenly it had become the worst! When Jeff asked his team why this was so, he received a surprising response: "Oh, that's Tim's store. He was our best operator until he found the Lord." Jeff, himself a follower of Jesus Christ, became dismayed upon hearing this and determined to investigate the dramatic shift in performance immediately.

When he met with Tim, Jeff was blunt and uncompromising: "As a Christian, I expect you to work hard to be our best store, not our worst. I would expect for you to give no less than 100 percent, as working for the Lord, rather than just for our company." He was referring to a Bible passage that states, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23-24).*

There is a tendency - and a temptation - to regard ourselves as working solely for the enterprise that employs us, and because of that, some people are content to do as little as they can get away with. As ambassadors for Jesus Christ, part of our witness for Him is not the words we express, but the quality and commitment we give to the work set before us. Followers of Jesus should be known for working diligently in the workplace.

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Writing to Christ followers in the ancient city of Thessalonica, the apostle Paul said, *"We worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you" (1 Thessalonians 2:9)*. He had an important message to communicate - the Good News of Jesus Christ - but Paul never forgot the virtues of hard work and demonstrating a believer's commitment to excellence. Here are some other biblical principles:

Work as hard as you can while you can. There will be a time when we cannot work, whether due to retirement, disability, or ultimately, our passing from this life. So we should regard the work we have to do as a privilege, not a burden. *"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom" (Ecclesiastes 9:10)*.

Do well at whatever work you are assigned, regardless of what it is. Taking another look at Colossians 3:23, it is helpful to realize Paul was not writing to top executives or high-performing salespeople. Recipients of his letter were mostly doing mundane, even disagreeable tasks, such as shoveling manure. So when he instructs them, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart," he is telling them, "It does not matter what you have to do; give it your best effort regardless."

Our work is part of God's divine purpose for us. Work may be difficult, and at times unpleasant, but from the start, God's intent was for us to serve Him and others through our work. *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10)*.

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Do you agree that the quality of our work should rightly be perceived as a reflection of the faith we profess? Why or why not?
2. What are some difficulties you have observed or encountered in seeking to live out your faith in the workplace and to uphold the values and principles the Bible teaches?
3. How do you typically respond when faced with a task or project that seems unpleasant, or even "beneath" your capabilities? Do you try to get it done as quickly as possible, even cutting corners if necessary? Or do you pursue that assignment with the same level of commitment you would give to a more challenging job?
4. What are your thoughts about work being part of God's divine purpose for our lives?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:7, 11:3, 12:11, 14:23, 21:5, 22:29; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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