

**A WORKING CAREER -- TIME FOR MANY RELATIONSHIPS****By Robert J. Tamasy**

Work. Some people love it and can't get enough of it. Many of those might qualify as workaholics. For others, work is a necessary evil, a means for putting food on the table, putting a roof over our heads, and providing clothing to wear, paying bills, and participating in pursuits that bring happiness. But have you ever considered what a lifetime of work looks like?

Let's say we engage in a typical, "average" 40-hour work week. Some readers work many more hours than that, but let's use 40 hours as our point of discussion. This means we will work approximately 2,000 hours over the course of a calendar year. Multiply that by the duration of one's working life, let's say 45 years. That amounts to 90,000 hours at work, whether you remain at one company or make multiple job and career changes. That is a lot of time!

A good question to ask ourselves is, "How will I spend that time?" Particularly considering that very few people work in isolation. Almost all of us work with other people and by necessity must interact with them daily. Which leads us to another question: "How should I deal with those relationships?"

Books have been written on this topic, but it would be good to consider just a few of the many things the Bible has to say about how we are to approach our work, as well as the people we must work with:

**Our work should set a positive example.** One approach to work is to do the bare minimum required. Go to work, get through the day, and go home. But that is hardly the example for others to emulate, especially for those of us who understand we are to work "as for the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). To the contrary, we are to pursue our work – wherever God has placed us – as a sacred calling. "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

**Our work should be above reproach.** We all can probably think of some people who lost our respect in the workplace due to their unacceptable quality of work, unethical behavior, and general failure to make worthwhile contributions to our organization's productivity and service to customers, suppliers, and their fellow workers. "And work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody" (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

**Our work ethic should be exemplary.** Diligence and excellence in the work we do speaks volumes about our character, commitment to others, and most important, our determination to serve as "Christ's ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Increasingly it seems people have failed to take pride in their work, as has been the experience of businesses that are struggling to find people willing to work. If they do show up for work, many seem easily distracted rather than focusing on their responsibilities. "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: you should mind your own business" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

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**Our work should reflect concern for others.** While fulfilling our job assignments and responsibilities, the workplace also can serve as a platform to reflect to others the love of Jesus Christ, showing we care about them and their needs. If we sense a coworker or customer is struggling, that may be an opportunity to show God's concern and compassion. "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

© 2024. Robert J. Tamasy has written *Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship*; *Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace*; *Pursuing Life With a Shepherd's Heart*, coauthored with Ken Johnson; and *The Heart of Mentoring*, coauthored with David A.

### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How many hours do you work each week, on average? Projecting that over a lifetime of work, how many hours do you expect to spend pursuing your career? Do you think you have invested those hours well so far?
2. Besides earning a livelihood financially and perhaps seeing your career advance through promotions or moving on to better opportunities, what do you hope will be the lasting impact or legacy of your working life?
3. Can you think of someone that you consider (or considered) to be a poor worker? If so, describe that individual and his or her approach to their job. Now, consider someone who impressed you as an outstanding worker. What was it about that individual that stood out for you?
4. What do you think about the idea of seeking opportunities to reflect God's love, concern, and compassion in the workplace? What guidelines do you think need to be followed in doing so?

### Challenge for This Week

This week would be a good time for you to re-evaluate your approach to work and your motivations for working. If you are a follower of Christ and you were to present the results of your efforts to Him directly, how do you think He would respond?

Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Do you have someone you can meet with on a consistent basis for encouragement, prayerful support and constructive criticism if needed? If so, make an appointment to meet with that person and discuss the questions above. If you do not have someone to meet with that you can trust, ask God to lead you to such a person.

#### NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 12:11, 14:23; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Colossians 3:17, 23-24; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

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