

This lesson is difficult to write because I am still learning so much about it. I confess that I have been guilty of making an unscriptural distinction between the secular and the spiritual. In my reading recently, I have learned that this dichotomy is much more prevalent in western culture. I don't know if that is true or not, but I know that I still deal with this mindset, and am trusting God to renew my mind along this line. The dichotomy I am referring to is that in some jobs people are working for the Lord and in others they are working for themselves. Or that some are involved in full time Christian work and others only part time. Or there are some who are building treasure in heaven and others who are working for filthy lucre. This way of thinking and viewing our work is not biblical. When Christians do what God has called them to do, all of their labors are for God and His glory.

1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Certainly there are those who are called to be pastors, teachers, and evangelists. There are others who are called to be pilots, doctors, and carpenters. When you are living for Jesus, all that you do is for God's glory. It doesn't matter what you are doing, as long as you are doing it unto the Lord. In the divine economy, work was created by God and is therefore good. Even before the fall of Adam, he was still given the task of tending the garden. Yes, "sweat" and "toil" are added to work as a result of the curse, but work is good (more on this in the next lesson). May God set us free from the lie that some jobs are secular and others are sacred.

In order to learn this lesson I had to live in both camps. When I rededicated my life to Christ in college, my first thought was that I wanted to serve him with everything in me. So I dropped one of my majors, took religion classes and went to seminary. After graduation I entered the ministry as an assistant to the pastor and youth leader. Subsequently I was ordained as the pastor. We were living in a church home where I was preaching, teaching, and overseeing summer youth camps. In those years I believed I was serving the Lord 100%. During that same time period I also worked as a cabinet maker, painter, and school teacher.

In the providence of God, we went through some difficult valleys and I left the "full time" ministry to teach at a Christian school and get our family back together. I began selling educational products and ended up writing a math curriculum. So now I am a businessman. I am still preaching, teaching, working with youth groups, teaching

Sunday school and speaking at conventions. My occupation revolves around education. Am I serving God any less? Absolutely not. My devotion to God has never changed. I am still serving the Lord with all of my time, talents, gifts, and energies. The only difference is that now I receive a check for my salary from my business, instead of from the church treasury. By God's grace I am still working for the glory of God. In hindsight I see that God used these experiences to begin balancing out my gnostic tendencies.

Being on both sides of the coin has given me a unique perspective, which I am grateful for. I was unbalanced. I am becoming more balanced and as a result more scriptural. Work is good. In my business I have also learned that when you work you are contributing to the greater good of the larger community. Every business is part of a team. I have excellent people that I work with; from the printers, box manufacturers, and plastic injection molders on the production end; to my office staff and sales reps, on the marketing end; and to United Parcel Service and United States Postal Service on the shipping end. I have been blessed with the talent and dedication of the people around me. I am glad they are working well to the best of their abilities and not wishing they were doing something more "spiritual". On a personal note, I am grateful there were dedicated surgeons who continued to do research and develop their skills when my 8 month old baby needed open heart surgery. Bottom line, IT IS NOT WHAT YOU DO, BUT WHO YOU DO IT FOR!! I choose to work for the King of Kings.

Prayer

Help us to have the mind of Christ as we view our labor. Enable us to live and work unto the Lord. And whether eating or drinking, inspire us to do all to the glory of God.

Exodus 20:9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work;

Work is good. God called man to be a steward and tend the garden which He created. Tending a garden is work. It is the work of a steward. And since it is before the fall, we can assume man was created to work, and it was good. After man fell, the work was coupled with sweat, and it became “work”. In our culture work has not been viewed in a positive light, but remember, originally it was a good thing. Sin added the sweat of the brow and made it more like the drudgery that it is perceived to be today. When we turn to Jesus and our sins are taken away, our life is changed and we are once again children of God. Can this transformation of making us new creatures extend to work as well? I think so. As Paul enjoins us, in *1 Corinthians 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* Our work is redeemed and ennobled as we work for Jesus, tending His garden once again.

In discussing this subject as a family we came up with some more applications. Work is loving your neighbor as yourself. If I love you and am painting your house, I will want to do a good job, just as I would want done for my house. As the owner of MathUSee, I think of this application in several different ways. One of my main goals is helping children understand mathematics. It is also helping parents understand math and giving them the tools and knowledge necessary so they can help their children. If math becomes a positive experience, then the quality of life will be improved in their family. To that end I am continually working to improve the product. I also have sales representatives who have the same commitment to serve. I refer to them as math missionaries. They are servants at heart, who get tremendous satisfaction out of helping people. They are also paid for their labor, which they should be. (This is a good thing for their home!) I also have co-workers at our headquarters who take care of shipping, producing the books, ordering inventory, maintaining the web site, and other tasks. They too enjoy their job, receive a salary, and have the satisfaction of knowing they are helping people. Then there are those who assemble our block sets and fraction kits, put labels on the videos, build the wooden boxes, and put together DVDs. They are a part of this team, as are the companies that print our books, duplicate our DVDs, film our videos, ship our materials, and heat our warehouse. All of this is required to help children understand math. If each member of this cooperative effort is working well and doing their job to the best of their abilities, it is a rewarding, fulfilling, and positive experience. This is good work, this is not drudgery.

My wife and I also do a lot of work around our home. That is another part of the garden we are tending. Personally, I didn't always like to keep things looking nice, but we

lived with an elderly Christian couple who had deep rooted convictions that the place where you live ought to be properly maintained and cared for, to the glory of God. Another man who I had tremendous respect for, felt the same way about caring for his vehicles. His cars were cleaned and maintained regularly, inside and out. I learned this attitude toward physical possessions, from these older godly Christians. We have worked to incorporate these attitudes and make them a part of our life.

As we discussed this in our home, I found that my personality is such that I get a sense of satisfaction from making improvements and accomplishing tasks. Whereas my wife just plain enjoys organizing, cleaning, and bringing order to our home. We see ourselves as stewards of our property and our vehicles. We have also found that when our physical surroundings are pleasant, they contribute to the emotional/spiritual part of us. It is rejuvenating and uplifting to walk through a well kept garden, or visit a well designed and well ordered home. Nice things, tastefully arranged, are pleasing and add to the overall atmosphere of a home. We enjoy having people come to our home for visits and meals. Having the physical environs decorated well contributes to the experience of those we are hosting. Many of our guests have commented on this in our guest book. Once again our work is for others and is part of serving them.

On another tack, as a man, I am keenly aware of how much my own sense of self esteem is tied to my success in the workplace. It is rewarding to know I am making a positive contribution to the lives of others. This knowledge makes my job satisfying. So while it is a good thing to help others, work also helps me. Being diligent and honest are not my natural characteristics. They had to be learned. That is part of being a disciple, developing new character qualities. Work is a great place to foster integrity and godly character. One of the great things about God, is his ability to redeem people and situations. He takes work, even after the fall, and redeems it and uses it to build character and create opportunities for us to serve one another!.

I hope these few paragraphs have helped you to have a new appreciation for tending or working in God's garden!! Work is good, because God is GOOD!!

Prayer

Father thank you for creating work for us to do. Help us to see this topic from your perspective and joyfully embrace what you have designed.